Introductio to the Science of Tafsir of the Quran

Author: Ayatullah Jafar Subhani
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point

.A discussion of the rules governing the interpretation of the Holy Quran

Foreword

In the Name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful

By Sayyid Muhammad Rizvi

The most tangible of miracles left by the Prophet Muhammad ('s) is the Qur`an. Al-Qur`an is the Divine revelation, which descended upon the Prophet's blessed soul in a .span of twenty-two years and few months

Muslims consider the Qur`an as the most important document for their faith. They .have given extreme importance to preserve, recite, memorize, and study the Qur`an

Gradually, different subjects emerged with the purpose of facilitating the process of studying the Qur`an: Ilmul Tajwid was devised to learn the proper recitation of the Qur`an; Hifz was invented as an art of committing the Qur`an to memory; and 'Ilmul Tafsir emerged as the science of exegesis of the Qur`an. Among these relevant subjects, 'Ulumul Qur`an flowered as a science dealing with the Qur`an itself: the revelation and its reality; how, when and where it was revealed; how it transformed from an oral tradition to the written form; the issue of abrogation, its meaning and reality; its textual integrity and its protection from alteration; how was it complied, by

whom and when. These are questions that are discussed in 'Ulumul Qur`an; and as such, it is the foundation of sciences dealing with the Qur`an.

This brief treatise deals with

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an important question in Ulumul Qur`an: the rules governing the interpretation of the Qur`an. It comes from the pen of Ayatullah Shaykh Ja’far Subhani, a leading Shi’i scholar of Qum, who is well-known for his expertise in Qur`anic studies and for .writing a thematic exegesis of the Qur`an

The Qur`an is indeed a guide for mankind, but its true interpretation depends on conditions that must be adhered to. The Qur`an itself says that some of its verses are of an allegorical nature while others are decisive; those who intend to create :confusion and mischief among the Muslims use the allegorical verses

.هُوَ الَّذِى أَنْزَلَ عَلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ مِنْهُ آيَاتٌ مُحْكَمَاتٌ هُنَّ أُمُّ الْكِتَابِ وَأُخَرُ مُتَشَابِهَاتٌ. فَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ فِى قُلُوبِهِمْ زَيْغٌ فَيَتَّبِعُونَ مَا تَشَابَهَ مِنْهُ ابْتِغَآءَ الْفِتْنَهِ وَابْتِغَآءَ تَأْوِيلِهِ. وَمَا يَعْلَمُ تَأْوِيلَهُ إِلاَّ اللُّهُ وَالرَّاسِخُونَ فِى الْعِلْمِ يَقُولُونَ آمَنَّا بِهِ كُلٌّ مِنْ عِنْدِ رَبِّنَا وَمَا يَذَّكَّرُ إِلاَّ أُوْلُوا الأَلْبَابِ

He (Allah) it is Who has sent down to you the Book. In it, are verses basic or“ fundamental (of established meaning); they are the foundation of the Book: others are allegorical. But those in whose hearts is a perversity follow the part thereof that is allegorical, seeking discord, and searching for its hidden meanings, but no one knows its hidden meanings except Allah and those who are firmly grounded in knowledge. They say: ‘We believe in the Book; the whole of it is from our Lord.’ And none will (grasp the Message except the people of understanding.” (Surat Ali-’Imran (٣), Verse ٧

Again, it

warns and says that if people do not approach the Qur`an with an open heart, then :they may be misguided by some of its contents

إِنَّ اللَّهَ لاَ يَسْتَحْيِى أَنْ يَضْرِبَ مَثَلاً مَا بَعُوضَةً فَمَا فَوْقَهَا. فَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا فَيَعْلَمُونَ أَنَّهُ الْحَقُّ مِنْ رَبِّهِمْ وَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا فَيَقُولُونَ مَاذَا أَرَادَ اللَّهُ بِهَٰذَا مَثَلًا. يُضِلُّ بِهِ كَثِيرًا وَيَهْدِى بِهِ كَثِيرًا وَمَا يُضِلُّ بِهِ إِلَّا الْفَاسِقِينَ

Allah does not disdain from the use of the similitude of things, lowest as well as“ highest. Those who believe know that it is the truth from their Lord; but those who reject faith say: ‘What does Allah mean by this similitude?’ By it He causes many to stray, and many He leads into the right path; but He causes not to stray, except those (who forsake (the path).” (Suratul Baqarah (٢), Verse ٢۶

Ayatullah Subhani has enumerated fourteen conditions for the correct interpretation of the Qur`anic verses. The understanding and interpretation is permissible provided it is approached with the conditions mentioned in this treatise otherwise one will be .guilty of imposing one’s personal opinions on the Qur`an

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An example of absurd interpretation is Rashad Khalifa’s self-styled “Authorized English Version” of the Qur`an that totally ignores the context in which the Qur`an was revealed as well as the teachings and interpretation given by the Prophet (‘s) who .was the recipient, teacher, and the living embodiment of the Qur`an

While commenting on verse ٣ of Suratul Maidah (۵) of the Qur`an (dealing with prohibition of certain animal products such

:as “the meat of pigs”) which reads

.حُرِّمَتْ عَلَيْكُمُ الْمَيْـــتَةُ وَالـدَّمُ وَلَحْمُ الْخِنْــزِيرِ وَمَـا أُهِـلَّ لِغَيْرِ اللَّهِ بِهِ وَالْمُنْخَنِقَةُ وَالْمَوْقُوذَةُ وَالْمُتَرَدِّيَةُ وَالنَّطِيحَةُ وَمَا أَكَلَ السَّبُعُ إِلاَّ مَا ذَكَّيْــتُمْ وَمَا ذُبِــحَ عَلَى النُّصُبِ وَأَنْ تَسْتَقْسِمُوا بِالأَزْلاَمِ ذَلِكُمْ فِسْقٌ.. .

Forbidden to you (for food) are: dead meat, blood, the flesh of swine and that on“ which has been invoked the name of other than Allah; that which has been killed by strangling, a violent blow, a headlong fall or by being gored to death; that which has been (partly) eaten by a wild animal; unless you are able to slaughter it (in due form); that which is sacrificed on stone (altars); (forbidden) also is the division (of meat) by ”...raffling with arrows: that is impiety

Khalifa writes that Allah (awj) has only prohibited “the meat – lahm” of the pigs and not “the fat,” and so usage of lard should be permissible. Khalifa has insisted on the literal meaning of “lahm” to exclude the fat of the pig from this prohibition, and has totally disregarded the teaching of the recipient of the Qur`an, Prophet Muhammad !(‘s), as accepted by Muslims for the last fourteen centuries

Rashad Khalifa seemed to ignore the fact that the Qur`an is not a butcher’s manual where all items are spelled out precisely, for example, “lean ground beef” without the !fat as opposed to “regular ground beef” with the fat

The Qur`an has used the term “meat/lahm” in chapter ۵, verse ۳ in a general sense and not as

.a butcher’s jargon, and it applies to any edible part of a pig

If he had read verse ۲۵۹ of Suratul Baqarah (۲), Khalifa would have seen that the term “lahm” has been used in the Qur`an also in a meaning that includes the meat and the fat together. Describing His power of resurrection, Almighty Allah (awj) demonstrates :the resurrection of a donkey that had died for a century

...وَانْـــظُرْ إِلـــى الْعِظَامِ كَيْفَ نُنْشِزُهَا ثُمَّ نَكْسُوهَا لَحْمًا... .

Look at the bones and see how We construct them, and cover them with flesh...“ ”((lahm

Surely Almighty Allah (awj) did not cover the donkey’s bones with “lean” flesh without the fat, skin, etc! The word “lahm” here applies to everything that was placed on the .bones

□□□

I commend Shaykh Saleem Bhimji for translating this Introduction to the Tafsir of the Qur`an, and strongly recommend it to all those who pursue the study of the Qur`an .with the intention of following its message and living by it

۹th July ۲۰۰۵

Sayyid Muhammad Rizvi

Biography of the Author

The Golden pages of history are replete with individuals who have sacrificed their lives to play a role in the guidance and leadership of humanity. Throughout the ages, we see many scholars who have dedicated their lives to the path of progress and spiritual upliftment of mankind, one such scholar who is also one of the greatest thinkers of the Islamic world is Ayatullah Ja’far Subhani. Having spent every moment of his adult life in research, writing and teaching, it is through

these channels that he has struggled to lift the cultural and spiritual status of .humanity

Ayatullah Subhani was born on the ۲۸th of Shawwal, in the year ۱۳۴۷ ah (۱۹۲۶ ce) in the city of Tabriz (Iran) into a scholarly and well-respected family. His father, the late Ayatullah Shaykh Muhammad Husayn Subhani Khayabani (۱۲۹۹ ah–۱۳۹۲ ah), was one of the outstanding scholars of Tabriz. A scholar in his own right, he spent years in the sacred city of Najaf al-Ashraf under the guidance of Shaykh Sharifatul Isfahani (d. ۱۳۳۹ ah) and Sayyid Muhammad Kazim Taba`taba`i (d. ۱۳۳۷ ah) – the author of al-Urwatul Wuthqa. After completing his studies, he returned home to Tabriz and spent more than fifty years teaching, writing and guiding the people and was also responsible for the training and educating of the future teachers and leaders of his .community

After completing his primary school and the introductory Islamic studies, Ayatullah Ja'far Subhani went on to study the books of Persian literature and grammar. Following this, at the young age of ۱۴ (۱۳۶۱ ah/۱۹۴۰ ce) he enrolled in the Theological Seminary of Tabriz named Talibiyyah and kept himself occupied with the preliminary .and secondary level of studies of Islam

He studied the Arabic language under the guidance of Hajj Shaykh Hasan Nahwi and Shaykh Ali Akbar Mudarris Khayabani - author of the book Rayhanatul Adab (d. ۱۳۷۳ ah/ ۱۹۶۶ ce). These studies took him five years – until the year ۱۳۶۵ ah (۱۹۴۴ ce), after which Ayatullah Subhani was able

to complete the second level of theological studies and then proceed on to begin the highest level of Islamic studies (Kharij) in Fiqh (Jurisprudence), Usulul Fiqh (Principles of Jurisprudence) and Philosophy. During this period of his studies, he benefited from :the knowledge of

The late Ayatullah al-Uzma al-Hajj Sayyid Muhammad Husayn Burujerdi (d. ١٣٨٠ .١ (ah/١٩٥٩ ce

The late Ayatullah al-Uzma al-Hajj Sayyid Muhammad Hujjat Kuhkamari (d. ١٣٧٢ .٢ (ah/١٩٥١ ce

The late Ayatullah al-Uzma al-Hajj Sayyid Ruhullah Musawi Khumayni (d. ١۴٠٩ .٣ (ah/١٩٨٩ ce

In the field of Philosophy, he studied the commentary of the book Manzumah and al-Asfar of Mullah Sadra and benefited from private lessons in the subject of realism under the guidance of the late fAllamah Sayyid Muhammad Husayn Taba'taba'i (d. .(١۴٠٢ ah/١٩٨٢ ce

In addition, he studied Ilmul Kalam under the late Sayyid Muhammad Badkuba`i (d. .(١٣٩٠ ah/١٩۶٩ ce

Ayatullah Subhani is one of those scholars who took up the pen and began to write on Islamic topics from a very young age and since the early days, his entire life has been spent in the fields of teaching and writing. It has been noted that the first book he ever wrote, titled The Criterion of Thinking (concerning the science of Mantiq - Logic) !was written when he was only ١٧ years old

At the age of ١٨, he began teaching the secondary level of Islamic studies (Sutuh) and was imparting knowledge in the fields of Fiqh, Usulul Fiqh, Philosophy, Hadith and .other subjects

In addition, he has written notes on the

lectures of Usulul Fiqh which were delivered by the late Ayatullah al-Uzma Hajj Sayyid .Ruhullah Musawi Khumayni which have been recently printed

Through all of this work, he has transformed himself into a teacher who goes deep into a subject and an effective thinker such that many important tasks have been :imparted upon him, including

Establishing a centre for the teaching of Ilmul Kalam (Science of Theology) and a .۱ research library and facility for those who are conducting research in the Islamic .sciences

Having written one complete topic-wise commentary of the Qur`an (currently at .۲ .(fourteen volumes and available in both Arabic and Farsi

Prepared and taught one complete course – printed in ۱۶ volumes – in the fields of .۳ .the History of Fiqh and the Fuqaha

Prepared and wrote manuals for the teaching of Usulul Fiqh, Ilmul Kalam, Hadith, .۴ Ilmul Rijal and the history and information on the various religions of the world and .their sects and divisions

In addition to this, he has written numerous works in Farsi – thus, the sum total of !books that he has to his credit is well over ۲۰۰

The books of this author, which have been translated into English, include the :following

Doctrines of Shi'i Islam: A Compendium of Imami Beliefs and Practices translated by .۱ ;Reza Shah-Kazemi

;The Islamic Moral System: Tafsir of Suratul Hujurat translated by Saleem Bhimji .۲

;The Keys to Success translated by the Al-Qalam Translators Guild .۳

The Message – Biography of the Prophet Muhammad translated by Islamic .۴ ;Seminary Publications

Wahhabism translated by .۵

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.Jalil Dorrani

We pray to Allah (awj) to grant the author of this work the blessings to be able to .continue on this path

Part ١: A Correct Approach to the Exegesis of the Qur'an

The Twentieth Century of the common era, corresponding to the fourteenth century of the Islamic calendar, started off with an awakening of the Eastern world, especially the Muslims. In this century, the magical spell of colonialism was, to an extent, broken. Countries that had been under colonization emerged as independent or at least partially independent countries. The Muslims and their intellectual leaders began to contemplate upon a series of fundamental issues, and the reasons for the subjection and backwardness of their societies was studied and thereby, they sought to find .reasons for their abject state

Amongst the issues that drew their greater attention was the propagation of the teachings, truths, and sciences of the Qur`an, since in the previous centuries, it was only the scholars who were benefiting from the truths of this Heavenly Book while the .rest of the people were limited to the mere recitation of the scripture

The lay people expended all of their energy in the correct recitation of the Qur`an and in learning the rules of proper pronunciation, while the books of exegesis of the .Qur`an written during those centuries were only of benefit to the scholars

Very rarely could it be seen that a scholar would sit down and write a commentary of the Qur`an which would be for the guidance of the common people in understanding the meaning of the

Qur`an and very rarely could it be seen that they would hold classes in which the .Qur`an would be expounded upon

It can be said that pondering and thinking upon the verses of the Qur`an was something limited to the scholars, while the rest of the people were only to benefit !from the recitation of the Qur`an

In addition to this frame of thought being very detrimental which is something that the scholars found out later, this belief went directly against the clear verses of the Qur`an as the Qur`an has invited all of humanity to think and ponder deeply on its verses and to take it as their radiant lamp (giving off Divine Celestial light) and as the .(best guide and leader of the Allah-conscious (those with Taqwa

and a way through which we can (تَذْكِرَةٌ) "The Qur`an introduces itself as a "Reminder be informed (of previous nations, scriptures and events that have transpired). In addition, we see that those who refrain from hearing the Qur`an and pondering upon the meaning of its verses have been severely reprimanded, as the Noble Qur`an :says

فَمَا لَـــــهُمْ عَنِ التَّذْكِرَهِ مُعْرِضِــينَ □ كَـأَنَّهُمْ حُمُرٌ مُّسْــتَـنْفِرَهٌ □ فَرَّتْ مِنْ قَسْوَرَهٍ

What is the matter with them that they evade the Reminder as if they were terrified" (donkeys fleeing from a lion?"(۱

The verses of the Qur`an which call upon those with consciousness of Allah (Taqwa), scholars, thinkers and intellectuals to listen and to contemplate upon the concepts presented in this Book are in such a great number that

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Suratul Muddathir (۷۴), Verses ۴۹ to ۵۱ -۱

we shall refrain from quoting them or translating them or even giving their chapter and verse numbers (in this short treatise). Rather, we shall only present one such :verse, suffice ourselves with it, and then go on to another discussion

وَلَقَدْ يَسَّرْنَا الْقُرآنَ لِلذِّكْرِ فَهَلْ مِنْ مُّدَّكِرٍ

And We have indeed made the Qur`an easy to understand for remembrance, then is" (there any that will receive admonition?"(١)

This verse and other such verses of the Qur`an tell us that understanding and making !use of the Qur`an is not limited to a select or specific group of people

In Summary: Sidelining the masses of people (from the Qur`an) and preventing them from benefiting from the verses of the Qur`an which was done in the previous !centuries, is something that goes directly against the words of this Heavenly Book

Due to the aforesaid, one of the greatest changes seen at the beginning of the fourteenth Islamic century is the opening up of the gatherings of the commentary of the Qur`an to everyone with the masses of people becoming acquainted with this Heavenly Book. In this regards, commentaries aimed at enlightening the general public have been written in the various Islamic countries (Egypt, Syria, Iraq, Pakistan and Iran) and gatherings are held – all with the purpose of acquainting the people .with the Qur`an

At this point, it is necessary for us to exhibit the correct way and method of pursuing a commentary of the Qur`an so that those who have an ardent desire to understand the meanings

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Suratul Qamar (٥۴), Verse ١٧ -١

.and teachings of the Qur`an may be able to make the best use of this Book

The commentary of the Qur`an, in the true meaning and way in which the commentator struggles to understand the meanings of the verses of the Qur`an – and not merely in which they simply follow those who have come before them in explaining the verses of the Qur`an, must be carried out through employing a series of rules, realizing various conditions, and following certain issues which will be alluded .to in the following pages

Part ٢: An Awareness of the Rules of Arabic Grammar

The first prerequisite in the exegesis of the Qur`an is that the commentator must have a complete knowledge of the rules of Arabic grammar so that under the shadow of this comprehensive knowledge, he is able to clearly differentiate the ‘the subject of from the (ألظرف) ’the ‘adverb ;(أل_مفعول) ’from the ‘the object of a verb (ألفاعل) ’a verb (ذو ’from the ‘subject of state (ألحل) ’the ‘denotative of state ;(ألمظروف) ’‘qualified verb (أل_معطوف عليه). ’from the ‘antecedent (أل_معطوف) ’and the ‘coupled ;(الحال

However it is not only in understanding the Qur`an for which this sort of a key is needed. Rather, in order to benefit from a book in any language, a person must possess knowledge of the rules of grammar of that particular language. How many times has it been seen that without knowing the rules of Arabic grammar, many .errors in the understanding of the meaning of a verse of the Qur`an take form

This first condition is so

.clear that there is no need to go further in the discussion of this point

However we should mention that being aware of the rules of Arabic grammar does not mean that a person must be a specialist in the rules of the sciences of: derivation, declension of words and syntax of sentences, since it is not necessary to be an expert in these fields to be a commentator of the Qur`an. Rather, it is sufficient that a person has a general understanding of these sciences, through which he would be able to understand and point out the various differences (in the words). Such a form of understanding (of the rules of Arabic grammar) can be attained by going through an entire course in the fields of the science of derivation (of the words) and the science of .syntax of sentences

Part ٣: An Awareness of the Meaning of the Words in the Qur`an

Knowledge of the meaning of the individual words of the Qur`an is one of the fundamental prerequisites for the commentary of the Qur`an, since understanding .compounded word is only possible after comprehending its original components

At this point, it is imperative to note that we must never rely upon the common meaning that we perceive of a word, which is in our minds, and explain the verse according to that interpretation. How often have we seen that with the passing of time, the meaning of a word completely changes and the common definition (of a particular word) which was well known during the time of the revelation may later

.undergo a change

Therefore, we must go forth and study the root meaning of the word and seek to acquire its original denotation, and only then can we proceed to explain a verse of the .Qur`an

in the common understanding of ,"وی_______غ" and "ی____عص" For example the words today means 'he sinned' and 'he deviated', whereas the original meaning of these two words (during the time of revelation of the Qur`an) was different from the .meanings that we commonly perceive today

We observe a group of people who prove the fallibility of the prophets by the :following verse

وَ عَصَ_____ی آدَمُ رَبَّ_هُ فَغَوَی

Thus did Adam distance himself from his Lord, and perform an action which had no" (benefit to it."(۱)

mean the same today as "وی_______غ" and "ی____عص" They assume that the words they did during the time of the revelation. However if the original meaning of these two words was searched out, people would definitely see that they have different (original) meanings than what is in the minds of the people today, which have been derived from the original meaning of these two words. However, the original meaning !of these two words was never associated with the technical meaning of sinning

The best book available which is able to guide us in finding the original meaning of the words contained in the Qur`an is the work al-Maqayis, written by Ahmad b. Faris b. Zakariyya (d. ۳۹۵ ah). This work has been printed in six volumes in Egypt and the author's entire endeavor in

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Surat Taha (۲۰), Verse ۱۲۱ -۱

compiling this work was to bring forth the original meaning of the words of the Qur`an and to make them available to us. Then he shows to us how the meanings of the words have changed with the passing of time and have appeared in the form of an independent meaning (with a loose affiliation to the original meaning), in addition .to possessing its own original meaning

Today, in the various Arabic dictionaries, we see that there are some words which have ten meanings to them and a person may actually think that a particular word has actually been formed to mean all ten things and actually has ten meanings to it! However, when a person refers to the work al-Maqayis, it would then be made clear to him that the word he is studying does not have more than one meaning associated with it and all other meanings are simply different facets of the original meaning, which, due to the passage f time, have been attributed to that word and taken as .independent meanings

In addition to the book al-Maqayis, the true commentator of the Qur`an must also refer to books such as, al-Mufradat fi Gharib al-Qur`an, written by Abul Qasim Husayn b. Muhammad, popularly known as Raghib al-Isfahani (d. ۵۰۲ ah) and the work, an-Nihayah fi Gharib al-Hadith wal Athar, written by Majd ad-Din Abul Saf'dat Mubarak b. Muhammad Jazri, better known as Ibne Athir (d. ۶۰۶ ah) if he wants to be able to differentiate the various meanings of

.the words in the Qur`an

This last book mentioned has been printed in Egypt in six volumes and even though this work looks at the words contained in the ahadith, however we are able to use this .work in the commentary of the Qur`an as well

In addition, the work Majma' al-Bahrain, written by Turayhi al-Najafi (d. ١٠٨۶ ah) is also a very beneficial work on the commentary of the words (contained in the .(Qur`an

Part ۴: Exegesis of the Qur`an through the Qur`an

With complete clarity, the Qur`an introduces itself as the explainer of all things, when :it states

وَ نَزَّلْـــنَا عَلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ تِـبْـيَاناً لِّكُلِّ شَىْءٍ

And We have sent down The Book (Qur`an) upon you (Muhammad) as a clarifier of" (all things."(١

If the Qur`an is an explainer of all things, then naturally it stands to reason that it would be an explainer of itself as well. Therefore, if there is some ambiguity in one verse of the Qur`an - and its ambiguity was for a purpose – we can resolve its ambiguity by referring to other verses which were revealed in regards to that same .issue

.At this point, we present an example of this concept

In Suratul Shu'ara (٢۶), verse ١٧٣, Allah (awj) states the following in regards to the :(nation of (prophet) Lut ('a

وَ أَمْطَرْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ مَّطَراً فَسَآءَ مَطَرُ الْمُـنْذَرِينَ

".And We rained down upon them a rain, and evil was the rain on those warned"

This verse gives us a glimpse of the sending down of something, however it is not clear what sort of precipitation this was

Suratul Nahl (۱۶), Verse ۸۹ -۱

was it a spatter of water or was it a raining down of stones? Therefore to clear this – issue up, another verse of the Qur`an, which removes the ambiguity of the verse quoted above, is referred to in which we are told:

...وَ أَمْطَرْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ حِجَارَةً مِّنْ سِجِّيلٍ...

"...and We rained down upon them stones made from baked clay..."(۱)

The word "حِجَارَةٌ" (stones) is the word, which clears up the ambiguity in the first verse.

In order for us to truly comprehend this third point, we present another example.

In one instance in the Qur`an, we read the following:

هَلْ يَنْظُرُونَ إِلاَّ أَنْ يَأْتِـيَهُمُ اللَّهُ فِى ظُلَلٍ مِّنَ الْغَمَامِ وَالْمَلاَئِكَهُ وَقُضِىَ الأَمْرُ وَإِلـى اللَّهِ تُرْجَعُ الأُمُورُ

"Will they wait until Allah comes to them in canopies of clouds, with Angels (in His train) and the question is (thus) settled? But to Allah do all affairs go back (for decision)."(۲)

The apparent reading of this verse shows us that it is not free of ambiguity, since the coming and going of an object are characteristics for a physical entity and we know that the sacred essence of Allah (awj) is free from being a physical body. Thus, we must seek to remove the vagueness, which is contained in this verse through some other means.

One such way is to carefully review other similar verses of the Qur`an which repeat the same or close to the same wordings as this verse.

Such a similar verse is in Suratul Nahl (۱۶), verse ۳۳, which contains approximately the same wording. This

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۱- Suratul Hijr (۱۵), Verse ۷۴

۲- Suratul Baqarah (۲), Verse ۲۱۰

other verse clearly shows us that the meaning of the ‘coming of the Lord’ as actually referring to the coming of ‘the commandments’ of Allah (awj) for the punishment and :retribution and (also) the orders and prohibitions from Him

هَـلْ يَنْـــظُرُونَ إِلاَّـ أَنْ تَـأْتِيَهُمُ الْمَلاَـئِكَةُ أَوْ يَـأْتِيَ أَمْرُ رَبِّكَ كَـذَٰلِكَ فَعَلَ الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ وَمَا ظَلَمَهُمُ اللَّهُ وَلَٰكِنْ كَانُوا أَنْفُسَـهُمْ يَظْلِمُونَ

Do they wait until the Angels come to them, or there comes the Command of your“ Lord (for their doom)? So did those who went before them (also wait). But Allah ”!wronged them not, no, they wronged their own souls

With complete explicitness, this verse removes any ambiguity present in the first the Command of Allah (awj)) the true subject of) ”أمر“ verse, and by adding the word .the verb ‘come’, is made clear

This form of explanation (tafsir of one Qur`anic verse by another verse) is a certain and unfailing method, and is the tradition of the Imams of the Shifa and is something .which even until now is employed by the erudite commentator of the Qur`an

The commentary of the Qur`an by the great teacher, Aqa Sayyid Muhammad Husayn Tabataba’i entitled, al-Mizan fi Tafsir al-Qur`an, has been written following this .particular method of commentary

Of course this issue is something different than the issue of ‘looking at the harmony which exists between the verses of the Qur`an’, which we shall cover in detail later on .in this discussion

At this stage, the goal is merely to present the synoptic view of a

verse through employing another verse. However at the next level, our goal is something different and thus at that stage, in order to reach to our own deduction of understanding a verse, we must not keep other verses of the Qur`an out of our attention [and only look at one verse without paying attention to other verses on the same topic].

It is incorrect to assume that if a verse's apparent meaning is devoid of any ambiguity, one can interpret it without taking into regard those verses of the same issue and then attribute that meaning to Allah (awj)!

With that said, the difference between these two forms of commentary of the Qur`an should be clear to the reader.

Part ۵: Examining the Occasion of Revelation of the Verses

The Noble Qur`an was revealed over the span of twenty-three years, following a chain of questions and answers [from the people] or with various events and incidents taking place.

Having knowledge of the history of revelation of the verses offers us a clearer understanding of the meaning of each verse. However, this does not mean that without knowing the history of revelation we are unable to go forth and explain the Qur`an. Rather, since the verses of the Qur`an are a source of guidance, clear proofs, and the distinguisher between right and wrong, just as we are told that:

هُدىً لِّلنَّاسِ وَبَــيِّــنَاتٍ مِّنَ الْهُدى وَالْفُرْقَانِ...

“...(this Qur`an is a) guide to mankind, and also clear (Signs) for guidance and judgement (between right and wrong)...”(۱)

and:

وَأَنْــزَلْنَا إِلَيْكُمْ نُوراً مُّبِيناً....

“...and We have sent down

Suratul Baqarah (۲), Verse ۱۸۵ -۱

(to you the manifest light (the Noble Qur`an)…"(۱)

thus naturally, this is exactly what has been meant and even without referring to the history of revelation of the verses, we are able to clearly understand their meaning.

However, with shifting our attention to the history of revelation of the verses, their meaning will become clearer and even more manifest.

At this point, we present an example that proves what we have just stated.

It is mentioned in Suratul Tawbah (۹) that:

وَعَلى الثَّلاثَةِ الَّذِينَ خُلِّفُوا حَـتَّى إِذَا ضَاقَتْ عَلَيْهِمُ الأَرْضُ بِمَا رَحُبَتْ وَضَاقَتْ عَلَيْهِمْ أَنْفُسُهُمْ وَظَنُّوا أَنْ لاَّ مَلْجَأَ مِنَ اللَّهِ إِلاَّ إِلَيْهِ ثُمَّ تَابَ عَلَيْهِمْ لِيَتُوبُوا إِنَّ اللَّهَ هُوَ التَّوَّابُ الرَّحِيمُ

"(He - Allah - turned in mercy also) to the three who were left behind; (they felt guilty)) to such a degree that the Earth seemed constrained to them for all its spaciousness, and their souls seemed straitened to them, and they perceived that there is no fleeing from Allah (and no refuge), but to Him. Then He turned to them that they might repent, for Allah is Oft-Returning, the Most Merciful."(۲)

There is no doubt that the meaning of the verse is clear, however a person would definitely have, in regards to the (deeper) meaning of this verse, the desire to know the following things:

۱. Who are the three people referred to in this verse?

۲. Why were they left behind?

۳. How did the Earth become constrained for them?

۴. How did their chests become straitened in regards to the life of this

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۱- Suratul Nisa (۴), Verse ۱۷۴

?world and how did their souls face pressure

?How did they realize that other than Allah (awj), there is no other source of refuge .۵

What is the meaning of the ability or opportunity given by Allah (awj) to humans .۶ ?(Tawfiq) in relation to these people

The answers to each of these questions can easily be achieved by referring to the .history of revelation of this verse

At this stage, it would not be out of place to remind ourselves of the following point which is that any narration which details the history of revelation of a particular verse of the Qur`an can not automatically be accepted. Rather, in regards to the trustworthiness of a tradition which contains the history of revelation (of a verse), there must be some measurements in place through which the correct and incorrect .narrations can be weighed

This is especially true when it comes to the history of revelation of the verses of the Qur`an which relate the stories of the previous prophets and the past generations of people as in this area of review, precaution must not be neglected as many of the narrations which discuss the history of revelation (of these types of instances) have been related from unknown and unfamiliar sources and as we know, we can never .(blindly) accept historical narrations from such sources

Unfortunately, many of the commentaries of the Qur`an do not take this point into consideration and therefore, some commentators have gone forth to relate any narration which accounts the history of

!revelation – even from people who are not trustworthy or reliable

Part ۶: Examining the Authentic Ahadith

point

Some of the verses of the Qur`an pertain to Islamic law and jurisprudence. They talk about the acts and deeds of those obligated to observe the Islamic laws and explain .their rulings

The number of such verses in the Qur`an are not few and some scholars enumerate such verses as being around five hundred! Although the actual number of such verses is fewer than this, however benefiting from them, without referring to the relevant .authentic Islamic traditions is incorrect

This is because a majority of these are either general guidelines whose conditions and restrictions have been mentioned in the traditions of the Noble Prophet (‘s) and his Infallible Successors (‘a) or are universal laws whose exceptions were later explained by the sunnah of the Noble Prophet (‘s). It goes without saying that establishing a law by the absoluteness of the absolute form or the universality of the .universal without referring to the limitations and exceptions is incorrect

In order for this issue to be clear in the minds of the readers, we present the following .examples

There are issues in the Noble Qur`an, for which there can be found no explanation .۱ save in the Islamic ahadith and the conduct of the early Muslims. For example, the Qur`an has made salat, sawm, zakat, khums, and hajj obligatory, while it has given no details about them. Thus, we have no choice but to seek the details of these general acts from

the Islamic ahadith and the conduct of the early Muslims. Hence without referring to these sources, any other kind of commentary and explanation about them would be equal to aspiring for the impossible. In explaining such verses, the method adopted by all the Muslims of the world from the early days of Islam until today has been the same [i.e. referring to the relevant authentic ahadith and the way of life of the Muslims].

۲. In the Noble Qur`an there are general and absolute laws whose exceptions and limitations appear only in the sunnah of the Prophet (‘s) and the traditions of the Infallible Imams (‘a).

This custom of not incorporating notes alongside laws is not restricted to the Qur`an. Rather, even legislative bodies of the world follow the same method: over a period of time in implementing the laws of a country, points of enlightenment and exceptions are incorporated into the laws. The difference however between the Qur`an and man made laws is that whereas the reason in separating the points of enlightenment from the original law in the case of the latter is the limitation of human awareness which requires annotations, exceptions and additions over time. In the Divine legal system, such limitation does not arise, and all the details of a law – whether those which are to be outdated or added in the future – are clear for a Law Maker like Allah (awj). Nevertheless sometimes social interests necessitate that the specifics of the laws be expounded gradually,

.and not all at one place

:For example, the Qur`an has prohibited the taking of interest and has stated

.وَ حَرَّمَ الرِّبٰوا...

(And He (Allah) has prohibited interest."(۱"

However, in the ahadith, we observe that in some circumstances, interest is permissible. For example: interest between a father and son or a husband and wife, and the benefits of such exceptions are completely clear, for in these examples, due to the uniformity of the kitty and the close relationship of both parties, interest does .not bear an oppressive color and has thus been designated as lawful

:According to the verse of the Qur`an which reads

وَمَا آتَاكُمُ الرَّسُولُ فَخُذُوهُ وَمَا نَهَاكُمْ عَنْهُ فَانْـتَهُوا

whatever the Prophet gives to you, take it; and whatever he forbids you from, stay..." (away from it..."(۲

we Muslims must adopt all the commandments which have come from the Messenger of Allah ('s) and distance ourselves from all the things which he has forbidden us from .doing

Thus, if a commentator of the Qur`an wants to explain such verses of the Qur`an – whose number is not small – and was to rely solely on the verses of the Qur`an, and was to abstain from referring to the ahadith, then he would have acted against the verse of the Qur`an quoted above and in essence, would have neglected this verse of !the Qur`an

The need to explain and elucidate some of the verses of the Qur`an which deal with the practical laws of Islam (whether the general import of their meanings such as .salat, zakat, etc

۱- Suratul Baqarah (۲), Verse ۲۷۵

۲- Suratul Hashr (۵۹), Verse ۷

or exceptions and limitations, i.e. the points of enlightenment and exceptions in law) by way of the sunnah and ahadith, led the Fuqaha (Jurisprudents) to expound such verses separately, and write books that specifically concern such kind of verses. The best works and exegeses of this nature on the ayat al-ahkam are of al-Jassas, Fadil al-Miqdad, Muhaqqiq Ardibili and al-Jazairi.

In order for the esteemed reader to develop a greater understanding of this kind of exegesis, we present two other examples:

٣. The Qur`an unconditionally permits any form of transaction and respects all forms of contracts, promises and pacts and considers it mandatory to act according to them. However, the sunnah of the Prophet ('s) and the ahadith – which are respected by all Muslims – proclaim some kinds of transactions as incorrect. For example, the buying and selling of instruments of gambling and intoxicant liquids, sales in transactions of munabadhah(١) and the like, of which, all their details have been mentioned in the ahadith.

Therefore, expounding the verse of the Qur`an which reads:

وَأَحَلَّ اللّٰهُ الْبَــــيْعَ...

"...And Allah has made business transactions permissible..."(٢)

Without referring to these traditions would be incorrect and baseless.

Likewise is the case with the verse that reads:

أَوْفُوا بِالْعُقُودِ.

"...Be truthful to all of your promises."(٣)

Without referring to the ahadith which proclaim some conditions and pacts as futile and invalid, it would be incorrect to explain the verse.

For example the phrase of the ahadith which states:

إِلاّ شَرْطاً أَحَلَّ حَرَاماً وَحَرَّمَ حَلاَلاً.

Respect all conditions) except a condition which makes a)“

p: ۲۵

The following is an example of a munabadhah transaction: The buyer agrees with -۱ the seller: (in nabadhtahu ilayya, faqad ishtaraytuhu bikdha (If you throw the commodity to me, it means that I have already bought it for such and such amount.) (al-’Allamah al-Hilli, Tahrir al-Ahkam, v.۲, p. ۲۵۶). We must realize that according to some experts in Islamic law, not all kinds of transactions which taken place in this form are invalid. There are some specific extensions, which come under the valid (.transactions. (Ed

Suratul Baqarah (۲), Verse ۲۷۵ -۲

Suratul Ma`idah (۵), Verse ۱ -۳

".forbidden act lawful and a lawful act impermissible

.No longer allows us to adhere to the absolute meaning of the verse

Testimonies of the Qur`an

The issue which has just been mentioned is a tangible reality which every exegete of the Qur`an is able to appreciate from up close. In addition, it satisfies every realistic person as well. Besides, the Qur`an clearly bears witness that it requires the exposition of the Noble Prophet (‘s), who apart from reading it to the people, is also .obliged to expound its meanings

At this point, we bring forth some examples from the Qur`an, but will not go into detail :in explaining them

:The first example is seen in the following verse .١

وَأَنْـزَلْنَا إِلَيْكَ الذِّكْرَ لِتُبَيِّنَ لِلنَّاسِ مَا نُزِّلَ إِلَيْهِمْ وَلَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ

And We have sent down to you (Muhammad) The Reminder so that you may explain" to mankind that which has been sent to them so that perhaps they may ponder and (think upon it."(١

This verse can only imply what we are trying to establish when we understand that so that you may) "لِتُبَيِّنَ" the Prophet’s (‘s) duty has been expounded by the words .(so that you may recite) "لِتَقْرَأَ" expound) which is different from the phrase

:In other words the Prophet (‘s) was commissioned to undertake two responsibilities

;a. Recitation of the verses of the Qur`an

b. Explaining the verses of the Qur`an and elucidating its meanings. It should be known that this verse and its likes do not pertain to all the verses of the Qur`an, but verses whose meaning

and details are impossible to know without an exposition from the Noble Prophet (‘s) and his successors. Examples of these are the ambiguous verses of Islamic law or .verses that require enlightenment and exceptions

:The second example is seen in the following verse .۲

لَا تُـــــحَرِّكْ بِهِ لِسَانَـكَ لِتَعْجَلَ بِهِ إِنَّ عَلَيْنَا جَمْعَهُ وَقُرْآنَهُ فَإِذَا قَرَأْنَاهُ فَاتَّبِعْ قُرْآنَهُ ثُمَّ إِنَّ عَلَيْنَا بَيَانَهُ

Do not move your tongue (Muhammad) to make haste with it (the recitation of the“ Qur`an). Surely upon Us lies the responsibility of collecting it and the reciting of it (the Qur`an). Therefore, when We have recited it, follow its recitation. Again on Us ((devolves) the explaining of it (the Qur`an).”(۱)

In this verse of the Qur`an, we see that Allah (awj) has taken three responsibilities :upon Himself

;a. Recitation of the Qur`an

;b. Collection of the verses of the Qur`an

c. Explanation of the meaning of the verses of the Qur`an. It goes without saying that expounding the meaning of the Qur`an to the Prophet (‘s) is only possible through Divine Revelation (Wahi) whereas the people are never directly addressed by Divine Revelation. The Divine Revelation on the Prophet (‘s) is either depicted in the Qur`an .(or the sunnah of the Noble Prophet (‘s

Therefore, in explaining the meanings of the verses of the Qur`an, one must refer to both of these sources (the Qur`an and the ahadith of the Prophet (‘s) and his .successors (‘a)) and we must never suffice with just one of them

In other words: In

Suratul Qiyamat (۷۵), Verses ۱۶ to ۱۹ -۱

this verse, Allah (awj) prohibits the Prophet ('s) from hasty recitation; thereafter He takes the responsibility from the Prophet ('s) for the acts of collecting and reciting the verses and orders the Prophet ('s) to follow the Angel in recitation. Finally He (also) takes the responsibility of expounding and elucidating the contents, as the following phrase of the verse clearly reveals:

ثُمَّ عَلَيْنَا بَيَانَهُ

"Again on Us (devolves) the explaining of it (the Qur`an)."

Here, what is the actual meaning of the exposition that Allah (awj) takes responsibility of? We should not conjecture that it refers to the exposition of defining the words of the verses, for this has already been mentioned previously in the phrase:

إِنَّ عَلَيْنَا جَمْعَهُ وَقُرْآنَهُ

"Surely upon Us is the responsibility of collecting it and the reciting of it (the Qur`an)."

Hence, there is no need for repetition of the same. Certainly, it refers to the exposition of those verses that require exposition from Allah (awj), and His Messenger ('s) and his true successors, after having received the same through Revelation (Wahi) which they then hand over to the nation.

It should be known however that the aim is not that every verse of the Noble Qur`an needs exposition so that someone should say that the following verse too needs exposition:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلَـــى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ

"Surely Allah has power over all things."

Rather, the purpose is that in order to be generally acquainted with the meaning of the Qur`an, we need an exposition of the Revelation. However at the

moment, our discussion does not concern the quantitative dimension of such .necessity

Obviously, just as we had mentioned in regards to referring to the occasion of the revelation of the verses, one must not undertake to explain the Qur`an with any report or hadith. Rather, each tradition must be carefully reviewed from the point of view of its chain of narrators and contents, and (only) after ascertaining that it .contains all the necessary conditions of reliability, can one seek assistance from it

Part ٧: A Consideration of the Harmony between all the Verses of the Qur'an

(A Consideration of the Harmony between all the Verses of the Qur`an(١)

What has been mentioned so far makes up the primary foundation of Qur`anic exegesis. However, one of the important conditions for the correctness of tafsir and its strength is that the commentator must not consider each verse of a particular surah as being separate from the other verses of the same surah as well as the verses of all other chapters of the Qur`an. The commentator must realize that all the verses have either a single goal behind them, or multiple goals, all of which can be .summarized in one extensive goal

The greatest stumbling block in the commentary of the Qur`an lies in this stage meaning that a person, due to his mere knowledge of the rules of Arabic grammar, goes forth to offer a commentary of a verse of the Qur`an, neglecting other similar verses revealed about the same issue. It was this very blunder in exegesis that resulted in the formation of different Islamic sects

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١ - It should be noted that 'referring to the harmony in the sum of verses of the Qur`an' is something other than the commentary of one verse (of the Qur`an) through employing another verse (of the Qur`an) which was mentioned in the third .condition given above for which, the difference is extremely clear

and ideologies, and every creed and founder of a new sect, in order to establish his !ideology, brought proof and testimony from the Qur`an

Who does not know that all of the different schools of Islamic thought, whether the Mujabbirah(۱), the Muftazilah(۲), the Mushabbihah(۳), the Mujassimah(۴), the Murjifah(۵), or the other proponents of ideologies and sects based their theoretical beliefs upon various verses of the Qur`an and considered themselves to be among the followers of the Qur`an! This is while, save for one, all other creeds are false and .are distanced from the guidance of the Qur`an

When we search for the root cause of the emergence of these sects, we observe that the reason, or at least one of the reasons for them coming about is that each sect attached itself to a specific verse and was negligent of the other verses that spoke of .the same subject which could have served as an exposition to first the verse

There is no doubt that the Qur`an contains numerous verses, which if taken and studied on their own, may make one reach various (incorrect) conclusions such as that of the beliefs of: predestination, free-will, likening Allah (awj) to His creations, tanzih(۶), belief in Allah (awj) having a body, etc. However, one can never state that all of these contrary and opposite beliefs and ideologies stem directly from the Divine Revelation (wahi) and that all of these make up the actual goals and objectives which the Qur`an has put forward, since the Qur`an clearly

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۱- This school of thought believes that man has no freedom and is merely a tool in the (.hands of Allah (awj). (Tr

۲- They believe that man is totally free and Allah (awj) exercises no power over his (.action. (Tr

۳- The anthropomorphists [Gr.,=having human form]. This term refers to those who (.believed in the Divine having a human form or having human characteristics. (Tr

۴- (.Corporealists. (Tr

۵- They were of the view that faith and belief are sufficient for salvation and good

(.deeds are not necessary. (Tr

۶ – Tanzih or ‘Deanthropomorphism’ literally refers to the belief of, “ridding of philosophy or religion of anthropomorphic beliefs and doctrines.” However, this belief becomes misleading when one disregards every perfect trait that the human being possesses and believes that Allah (awj) is free from the perfect attributes. This is incorrect, for Allah (awj) possesses all of the perfect attributes but in the infinite and absolute form. Thus, for example, we cannot say that Allah (awj) has no mercy because man has mercy, but rather that ‘Allah has mercy, but in the Absolute sense.’ His mercy, unlike human mercy, does not follow the state of pity, which is “a state of change”. [Tr.]

:states that

وَلَوْ كَانَ مِنْ عِنْدِ غَيْرِ اللَّهِ لَوَجَدُوا فِيهِ اخْـتِلاَفاً كَثِيراً

And had this (Qur`an) come from any other than Allah then surely you would have“ (found numerous discrepancies within it.”(١)

This confusion can also be cleared up if we do not forget the unity and harmony which .exists amongst the verses of the Qur`an

In addition, we must keep in mind that the Qur`an has been described as possessing :the following two characteristics

;a. Verses which are similar to one another

B. Often repeated – from the point of view of their content (not necessarily repeated .(verbatim

:This is clearly seen in a verse of the Qur`an in which it is stated

أَللَّهُ نَزَّلَ أَحْسَنَ الْحَدِيثِ كِتَاباً مُّـتَشَابِهاً مَّـثَانِىَ

Allah has revealed the best of discourses in the form of a Book, consistent with itself,“ ((yet) repeating (its teachings in various aspects).”(٢)

Naturally, one thing may resemble something else and whereas it is possible that they may differ in some regards and aspects, however without doubt they would also have points of conformity and commonality amongst them and it is for this reason that they are referred to as being similar to one another. Therefore, in explaining one verse of the Qur`an, one must refer to all of the other verses which have been revealed in the same regard. At this point, from the collection of all the verses, a final opinion would be concluded, and this is how one should carry on the entire process of commentary .of the Qur`an

It is at this point

Suratul Nisa (۴), Verse ۸۲ -۱

Suratul Zumur (۳۹), Verse ۲۳ -۲

that the necessity to search for another form of commentary of the Qur`an which is known as the 'thematic exegesis' of the Qur`an becomes obvious. The methodology used in such a commentary of the Qur`an is that all of the verses on a particular theme are – as much as is humanly possible – gathered together, and then at that point, one keeps in mind the context of each verse and compares one verse to another. From this overall review, one outcome is extracted.

The other form of exegesis of the Qur`an, meaning the explanation of the verses of the Qur`an in sequential order chapter by chapter – is no doubt beneficial and very valuable, even for a select group of people and there is no other method of commentary of the Qur`an which would be as fruitful. Unfortunately however, the only way to remove the curtains which may cloud over the true goals and aims of the verses of the Qur`an is through the thematic exegesis of the Qur`an, as this is the true soul and essence of seeing the harmony in verses of the Qur`an. In addition, this is the same path which has been taken by the author of this (present) work in compiling, Manshur-e-Jawid-e-Qur`an - "The Everlasting Charter of the Qur`an"(۱) and the work, Mafahimul Qur`an - "The Understandings of the Qur`an"(۲). Of course it goes without saying that these works of ours are not free from flaws and defects, and those who shall come in

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۱- The thematic exegesis of the Qur`an written in Farsi. Fourteen volumes have been published to date.

۲- The thematic exegesis of the Qur`an written in 'Arabic. Seven volumes have been published to date. This work can be read in its entirety at www.imamsadeq.org [۱۰]

.the future will complete and perfect this form of exegesis of the Qur`an, God willing

Part ٨: Examining the Context of the Verses of the Qur`an

point

Paying attention to the context of the verses, that is which comes before and after a particular verse (which we wish to comment upon) is in some ways, a branch of the sixth prerequisite of tafsir – consideration of the harmony that exists in all the verses .of the Qur`an

For example, we know that the Qur`an speaks about various issues and brings forth numerous verses in regards to a specific topic. In such an instance, referring to only one verse and neglecting the other verses would not result in anything but .inexactitude and distancing oneself from the true goal of this Noble Book

However it is not only the Qur`an which, in trying to comprehend its sentences, must be understood and explained by seeing everything which comes before and after a particular verse. Rather, in order to explain the words of any wise person, this method .(which is currently being discussed) must be employed

In order for this discussion to be clear in the minds, we present the following :examples

:In Suratul Araf (٧), verse ٣٥, Allah (awj) says

يَا بَـــنِى آدَمَ إِمَّا يَأْتِيَنَّكُمْ رُسُلٌ مِّنْكُمْ يَقُصُّونَ عَلَيْكُمْ آيَاتِى فَمَنِ اتَّـــقَى وَأَصْلَحَ فَلاَ خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلاَ هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ

O children of Adam! If there come to you Messengers from among yourselves,“ relating My communications to you, then whoever shall guard (against evil) and act (aright, they shall have no fear nor shall they grieve.”(١

In explaining this verse

١- The Arabic word 'إِمَّا', mentioned in this verse was originally two words – 'إِنْ' and 'مَا' however since the area of pronunciation of these two words is very similar in the Arabic language, the letter 'ن' was merged with the letter 'م'. In reality, the word 'إِمَّا' is actually in the meaning of a 'condition' and thus, the meaning of this verse becomes, "Surely IF messengers come to you…"

of the Qur`an, if we abstain from referring to that which came before and after it and simply take the verse on its own, then its meaning would be that the Qur`an has kept the door open for other prophets to come after the Noble Prophet Muhammad (‘s) and has not shut the door of prophethood. However we know that in another verse of the Qur`an, it is stated that Prophet Muhammad (‘s) is the final and seal of all the prophets (and none shall come after him) just as we read:

مَا كَانَ مُحَمَّدٌ أَبَا أَحَدٍ مِّنْ رِجَالِكُمْ وَلْكِنْ رَّسُولَ اللَّهِ وَخَاتَمَ النَّـبِـيِّـينَ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيماً

“Muhammad is not the father of any of your men, but he is the Messenger of Allah and the last (and seal) of the prophets, and Allah is cognizant of all things.”(1)

The root of these two opposite conclusions is that in the commentary of the first verse mentioned, there was no attention paid to the context of the verse and it was reviewed without keeping in mind the commentary of the verses that came before or after it. However, if one simply refers to the Qur`an itself, they would have seen that this verse is only one section of a collection of twenty-six verses (verses eleven to thirty-six) of Suratul Araf (7) which elucidate upon an event that took place at the beginning of the creation of humanity. Thus, we see that these verses are in regards to the time period of

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1- Suratul Ahzab (33), Verse 40

the creation of Adam ('a), his being removed from Paradise and being ordered to live .on the Earth along with his wife and children

In such an instance in time (when this was happening), Allah (awj) addressed the sons of Adam ('a) and told them, "O' children of Adam! If a prophet comes to you, then whosoever of you displays consciousness (Taqwa) of Allah and chooses the path of "!righteousness shall have no fear or grief

There is no doubt that after Adam ('a) settled down on Earth, countless prophets came from Allah (awj) to guide mankind and all of their missions were one and the :same

فَمَنِ اتَّقَــى وَأَصْلَحَ فَلاَ خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلاَ هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ

then whoever shall guard (against evil) and act aright, they shall have no fear nor..." ".shall they grieve

Such an address (by Allah (awj)) which took shape at the beginning of creation does not prevent us from accepting the fact that our Prophet (Muhammad ('s)) is the final prophet and it is through him that the door of Propethood, which up until the point in time (of him coming) had been open for so many years, was shut to humanity for .various reasons

Thus in summary: In this instance, the Qur`an is addressing a specific period and is relating an incident to us. However this does not mean that this is something that would take shape after the revelation of this verse that is being reported about (that .(another prophet would come

This reality only becomes apparent when we know

that the collection of twenty-six verses (verses ۱۱ to ۳۶) of the Qur`an in Suratul Araf (۷) are directly addressing the (actual) children of Adam ('a) as is seen when they are directly spoken to three times by the phrase, "O' Children of Adam!" (یا بنی آدم) as can be seen in the verses below:

يَا بَـنِى آدَمَ قَدْ أَنْزَلْـنَا عَلَيْكُمْ لِـبَاساً...

"O' Children of Adam! Surely we have sent down to you clothing..."(۱)

يَا بَـنِى آدَمَ لَا يَفْتِــنَـنَّكُمُ الشَّـيْطَانُ كَمَا أَخْرَجَ أَبَوَيْكُمْ...

"O' Children of Adam! Do not let Satan test you as He ousted your parents..."(۲)

يَا بَـنِى آدَمَ إِمَّا يَأْتِيَنَّكُمْ رُسُلٌ مِّنْكُمْ...

"O' Children of Adam! If there come to you Messengers from among yourselves..."(۳)

In another instance in which the Qur`an speaks about the beginning of creation, we see the same wordings being used, such as in the following example:

أَلَمْ أَعْهَدْ إِلَيْكُمْ يَا بَـنِى آدَمَ أَنْ لَّا تَعْبُدُوا الشَّيْطَانَ...

"Did I not take a covenant from you, O children of Adam that you should not serve Satan?"(۴)

This form of addressing (by Allah (awj)) is related to the period of the beginning of creation and is in accordance with that occasion and is not in reference to the time of the Noble Prophet of Islam ('s).

With this explanation, it becomes clear that the address in the verse under review is among the first Divine addresses at the time of the beginning of creation. Thus, there is no substance in relating them to the issue of the finality of prophethood and

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۱- Suratul A'raf (۷), Verse ۲۶

Ibid., Verse ۲۷ -۲

Ibid., Verse ۳۵ -۳

Surat Yasin (۳۶), Verse ۶۰ -۴

the source of this error in judgment is due to not paying attention to the context of the .verses

A Consideration of the Context of the Verses and the Successively Narrated Ahadith

Even though referring to that which comes before and after a particular verse (in understanding its true meaning) is one of the keys for a correct and accurate exegesis of the Qur`an, unfortunately, the context of the verse is effectual only when the verse under review is not proven to be independent of the verses which came before and after it. When it is proven to be independent of the verses around it, then we .cannot refer to the context of the verses in order to explain and comment upon it

A study of the verses of the Qur`an confirms the fact that sometimes (and we stress on the word sometimes) before the Qur`an finishes speaking about a particular topic, it may bring a new theme into the discussion. Then when it finishes with that topic, it would revert to the original theme of discussion and this is one of specialties of the Qur`an. This is the same thing that is more or less, seen in the words of eloquent and .articulate speakers as well

Of course, our purpose in stating this is not to say that in the Qur`an, within the confines of a particular discussion, another topic is brought up which has absolutely no relevance or bearing to the original discussion. Technically speaking, we do not wish to state that one verse that is built upon a specific theme and issue is

mixed in with other verses that are related to other topics and themes and intrudes or interrupts the flow of verses. Rather, our meaning here is that at the same time that it safeguards the perspective of the verses, before concluding a topic within the initial discussion, a new topic is also introduced and the first topic is then completed in the .(remaining) verses

Examples of this Issue

In Suratul Baqarah (٢) in verses ٢٢١ to ٢۴٠, the Qur`an brings forth issues related to husband, wife, children, the issues of divorce and the death of the husband. The entire collection of verses of this section is completely in unity and harmony with one .another

However, after verse ٢٣٧, in verses ٢٣٨ and ٢٣٩ we see that the issue of protecting the salat, especially the 'middle' salat has been mentioned and the performance of the salat in the state of jihad has also been brought up. After this, we see that the verses then revert to the initial topic (of marriage and family life). Thus, what is the suitability for these two verses to come up in the middle of the discussion on family issues? At present, this is not our discussion however this is something that we are able to .perceive by reviewing these verses

Nevertheless, at this point, in order for this issue to be understandable for the :readers, we bring forth these verses of the Qur`an

وَإِنْ طَلَّقْـتُمُوهُنَّ مِنْ قَبْلِ أَنْ تَمَسُّوهُنَّ وَقَدْ فَرَضْـتُمْ لَهُنَّ فَرِيضَةً فَنِصْفُ مَا فَرَضْـتُمْ إِلَّا أَنْ يَعْفُونَ أَوْ يَعْفُوَ الَّذِى

بِــيَدِهِ عُقْدَةُ النِّكَاحِ وَأَنْ تَعْفُوا أَقْـــرَبُ لِلتَّقْوَى وَلاَ تَــنْسَوُا الْفَضْلَ بَيْـنَكُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ بَـــصِيرٌ حَافِظُوا عَلَى الصَّلَوَاتِ وَالصَّلاَةِ الْوُسْطَى وَقُومُوا لِلَّهِ قَانِـتِينَ فَإِنْ خِـفْـتُمْ فَرِجَالاً أَوْ رُكْبَاناً فَإِذَا أَمِـنْـتُمْ فَاذْكُرُوا اللَّهَ كَمَا عَلَّمَكُمْ مَا لَمْ تَكُونُوا تَعْلَمُونَ وَالَّذِينَ يُتَوَفَّوْنَ مِنْكُمْ وَيَذَرُونَ أَزْوَاجاً وَصِيَّةًلِأَزْوَاجِهِمْ مَـتَاعاً إِلَى الْحَوْلِ غَيْرَ إِخْرَاجٍ فَإِنْ خَرَجْنَ فَلاَ جُـــنَاحَ عَلَيْكُمْ فِي مَا فَعَلْنَ فِي أَنْـفُسِهِنَّ مِنْ مَعْرُوفٍ وَاللَّهُ عَزِيزٌ حَكِيمٌ

And if you divorce them (women) before you have touched them (had sexual" relations with them) and you have appointed for them a portion (dowry), then (pay to them) half of what you have appointed, unless they relinquish or he should relinquish in whose hand is the marriage tie; and it is nearer to righteousness that you should relinquish; and do not neglect the giving of free gifts between yourselves; surely Allah sees what you do. Attend constantly to prayers and to the middle prayer and stand up truly obedient to Allah. But if you are in danger, then (say your prayers) on foot or on horseback; and when you are secure, then remember Allah as He has taught you what you did not know. And those of you who die and leave wives behind, (make) a bequest in favour of your wives of maintenance for a year without turning (them) out, then if they themselves go away, there is no blame on you for what they do of lawful (deeds by themselves, and Allah is Mighty, Wise."(١)

As can be seen in

١- Suratul Baqarah (٢), Verse ٢٣٧ to ٢٤٠

these verses, the first and last past of this section are in regards to the issue of marriage and relations while the verses in the middle are in regards to protecting the salat – with special emphasis on the middle salat and the salat at the time of fear .(.(such as war or from an enemy, etc

Therefore, whenever clear and unambiguous proofs such as a successively narrated hadith (mutawatir) or a hadith which accompanies hints that necessitate knowledge of the content of the tradition contradict the context of the verses, then we must act according to the conclusion which we have reached from the ahadith. Thus, in such an instance, we must not regard the context of the verses of the Qur`an, but rather .focus our attention on the correct ahadith

:We present the following two examples to further elucidate this issue

a. In Suratul Ahzab (٣٣), from verses ٢٨ to ٣٥, the Qur`an discusses the wives of the :Noble Prophet of Islam ('s). However in verse ٣٣, we see the following sentence

إِنَّمَا يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ لِيُذْهِبَ عَنْكُمُ الرِّجْسَ أَهْلَ الْبَيْتِ وَيُطَهِّرَكُمْ تَطْهِيرًا

Surely Allah wishes to remove all forms of impurity from you, Ahlul Bayt, and to purify" (you with a thorough purification."(١

The context of the verses before and after would tell us that this verse is related directly to the wives of the Noble Prophet of Islam ('s). However, the successively narrated ahadith which have come to us from both sides (the Shi'a and the Ahlus Sunnah) tell us that this

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Suratul Ahzab (٣٣), Verse ٣٣ -١

verse was revealed in regards to a specific group of people who have been beautified with the adornment of infallibility. Thus in this instance, the undeniable ahadith take .precedence over the context of this verse

Other than this, there is even clear proof in the verse itself to prove that this part of the verse is not in regards to the wives of the Prophet of Islam (‘s). These two proofs which announce to us "يُطَهِّرَكُمْ" and "عَنْكُمْ" are the masculine pronoun used in the word that there is no relationship between this part of the verse and that which has come (before it in regards to the wives of the Prophet Muhammad (‘s).(١

Then, why has the purity and infallibility of the Ahlul Bayt (‘a) been mentioned within the discussion concerning the wives of the Prophet of Islam (‘s)? This is not part of our .discussion here and thus we leave it at that

b. In Suratul Ma`idah (٥), from verses ١ to ٥, the Qur`an speaks in a particular way about meat and other issues regarding food. However in the middle of the third verse, :we read

أَلْيَوْمَ أَكْمَلْتُ لَكُمْ دِينَكُمْ وَأَتْمَمْتُ عَلَيْكُمْ نِعْمَتِي وَرَضِيتُ لَكُمُ الإِسْلاَمَ دِيناً

On this day, I have perfected your religion for you and have completed My bounties" (upon you and have been pleased to choose Islam as your religion."(٢

The rule of reviewing the context of the verses of the Qur`an, commands us to accept that the part of the verse quoted above is in regards to

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In our work, Mafahimul Qur`an, vol. ٥, and The Third Path, we have discussed this -١ verse in great detail and have proven, through using the undeniable proofs that the meaning of Ahlul Bayt (‘a) is reserved for a specific group of people who were clearly .(identified by the Noble Prophet of Islam (‘s

Suratul Ma`idah (٥), Verse ٣ -٢

the day when various things were forbidden for consumption such as the animal which has died on its own, blood, the flesh of swine and other things. Thus, the as mentioned in this part of the verse is the day when these (أليوم) 'meaning of 'this day things were made prohibited for human consumption. However the clear and unambiguous proofs and the successively narrated ahadith state that this part of the verse was not revealed in regards to the prohibition of various types of meat. Rather, we are told that this part of the verse was revealed in regards to the Day of Ghadir [۱۸th of Dhul Hijjah] – the day when the faith and teachings of Islam were perfected and completed through the designation of the leader of the community [after the [.(Prophet of Islam ('s) – that being Imam 'Ali b. Abi Talib ('a

Thus, the commentator of the Qur`an who is seeking to display the realities (of the Qur`an) must refrain from explaining the verse according to the context of that which has come before and after it and must instead refer to the definite ahadith in this .regard

In this issue, there are many more examples which we can bring to act as proofs for our statements, however in order to keep this discussion brief, we shall not mention .them here

Part ۹: Awareness of the Various Viewpoints and Opinions

Being fully aware of the various viewpoints and opinions of Muslim commentators on the Qur`an who have spent their entire lives engrossed in the Qur`an, and

who can rightfully be called the ‘teachers of the science of the Qur`an’ is another .foundation necessary in the commentary of this Noble Book

There is no doubt that from the first day of revelation of the Qur`an, due to the awareness of the people about the occasions of revelation and the prevalent circumstances during revelation, a great deal of the understandings of the verses were clear to them and in understanding the goals of the Qur`an, they were not in .(need of seeking out the viewpoints and opinions (of others

However, due to the gap in time (between the era of the Prophet (‘s) – the revelation of the Qur`an and our time), and since those points of the history of revelation are no longer with us, we must seek assistance through the thoughts and viewpoints which .would assist us in understanding the issues in regards to the history of revelation

We must never go forth to explain the verses of the Qur`an without this in place since the thoughts and reflections of a group of people are always at a higher level than the thoughts and reflections of an individual. As we know there is a possibility of an individual falling into error in thought more so than when we reflect and review the .thoughts of a group of people

Of course, what we have just mentioned here is something other than the issue of making our own thoughts and reflections the slave of what others think and giving up

.(the freedom of thought (on the verses of the Qur`an

Rather, the purpose here is that in going forth in the commentary of a verse of the Qur`an, we should not be negligent of the opinions of other commentators, nor should we ignore what others have said, since it is very well possible that by referring to what others have stated, it may actually assist us in choosing an opinion and .outcome or may also help us deflecting an error of judgement

At this point, another issue must be mentioned which is that at what time in the course of the explanation of the verses of the Qur`an must a commentator refer to the other opinions concerning a particular verse of the Qur`an? Must he first review and study the various opinions in regards to a particular verse and then when he has become aware of the various opinions, puts forth his struggles and endeavors to separate the truth from falsehood? Or, would he first struggle to bring forth a commentary of his own and then after this, when he is ready to introduce his opinions, he would then ?(refer to the beliefs and thoughts of other people (to compare his work to

For the novice in the field of commentary of the Qur`an, the first path is the most beneficial to take, while the person who is a well-read researcher may choose the .second path

Many times it can be seen that becoming acquainted with the opinions and viewpoints of others

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may actually prevent a person from going forth to conduct his own independent .(research and investigation (thus limiting the work of the expert

Part ١٠: Distancing Oneself from any Form of Prejudgment

Going forth to study the verses of the Qur`an with preconceived notions is one of the greatest of dilemmas in the exegesis of the Qur`an. The person who, with prefabricated beliefs looks at the Qur`an and feels that his goal is to search for proofs to back up his own predetermined thoughts through the Qur`an will never become .aware of the true objectives of the Qur`an and will not be able to reach his outcome

The commentator of the Qur`an must look towards this Book with complete objectivity and with no sort of preconceived notions so that he may be able to arrive .at the true objectives of the Qur`an

Any sort of preconceived ideas act as a major veil between the commentator and the (true) objectives of the Qur`an and will lead the commentator to having the Qur`an submit to his beliefs rather than he submitting to the Qur`an. Instead of being a student of the Qur`an, he would try to become the teacher of the Qur`an (imposing !(his beliefs on the text of the Qur`an

The narrators of hadith from within the Muslim world are in complete agreement that :the Noble Prophet (‘s) has stated that

مَنْ فَسَّرَ الْقُرآنَ بِرَأْيِهِ فَلْيَتَبَوَّء مَقْعَدَهُ مِنَ النَّارِ.

Whosoever interprets the Qur`an according to his own opinion must take for himself“ ”.a place in the hell fire

The meaning of ‘interpreting the Qur`an according

.to one’s own opinion’ can be nothing other than that which we have just mentioned

The interpretation of one verse of the Qur`an with the assistance of another verse, like when an allegorical verses of the Qur`an is interpreted by using one of the decisive verses of the Qur`an, is not in the least problematic. Such a form of interpretation is not considered as commentary of the Qur`an according to one’s own opinion. Rather, this is elucidating upon the Qur`an through employing the Qur`an itself which is something which we have already spoken about in one of our previous .discussions

What is not permissible is that without relying upon other verses of the Qur`an and the definitive ahadith, due to a person’s previously formed opinions and ideas, he goes forth to explain the verses of the Qur`an with his own goals in mind! It goes without saying that if a person did not have such preconceived notions (to implant into the Qur`an) then he would never think about interpreting the Qur`an in such a .fashion

In the course of history, we see groups of people, referred to as the Batiniyyah [those who claimed to be researching into the inward content of the verses of the Qur`an] and others who claimed to be ’Urafa` (mystics), and as of recent, other misguided groups - even within our own era - who have played around with the verses of the Qur`an who have sought to explain The Book according to their own wishes. Not only are

these people themselves misguided, rather, they are also the source of misguiding !others

At this point, we bring forth the following simple example and leave the detailed .examples and illustrations for another time

:There are a series of verses (۱۹-۲۲) in Suratul Rahman (۵۵) which read

مَـــرَجَ الْبَحْرَينِ يَلْتَقِيَانِ ◻ بَـىْـنَهُمَا بَـــرْزَخٌ لَّا يَـبْغِيَانِ ◻ فَبِأَيِّ آلاَءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبَانِ ◻ يَخْرُجُ مِنْهُمَا اللُّؤْلُؤُ وَالْمَرْجَانِ

He has made the two seas to flow freely (so that) they meet together. Between them" is a barrier that they cannot pass. Which then of the bounties of your Lord will you ".deny? There comes forth from them pearls, and coral

:In these verses, the following topics are covered

.There are two bodies of water which meet together .۱

Between these two bodies of water, there is a barrier present which does not .۲ .permit the waters to mix with one another

From these two bodies of water, there are jewels such as pearls and coral, which .۳ .are extracted

What is the meaning of these two seas or bodies of water from which pearls and coral are extracted? What is the meaning of the two different types of water which meet together somewhere in this, world; however, as we are told, the water of one sea ?never mixes with the water of the other sea

Is the difference in the two types of water a natural one - such as one being sweet and delicious tasting water, while the other one is salty and bitter; or is one body of ,water clear

?transparent (clean) water while the other is dark, murky and dirty

Where do these two bodies of water exist in the world today and where can they be found? At present, our discussion is not the actual location of these bodies of water. However, when Muhy ad-Din al-Arabi (d. ۱۲۴۰ ad), who was absorbed in the teachings of mysticism ('Irfan) and philosophy, went forth to comment on these verses, he did :so with a mind so engrossed in philosophy and mysticism that he wrote

The meaning of the 'bitter body of water' are the corporeal and physical issues" (related to the human being) whereas the meaning of the 'sweet and pleasant body of water' is the human spirit; both of these meet in the existence of the human being, and the barrier and separator between them is the 'animal soul', which although does not reach to the level of the human spirit in terms of purity and refinement, is higher and better than the physical body in terms of darkness and murkiness. At the same time neither of the two dimensions transcend their boundary: neither does the spirit bestow immateriality to the body, nor does the body make the spirit descend and (place it among the material entities."(۱

This example should give us a good understanding of what 'exegesis of the Qur`an according to one's own personal opinion' is and how such a preconceived notion and belief (in a particular science or discipline) can have an effect on the actual commentary of

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Tafsir of Ibne 'Arabi, vol. ۲ pg. ۲۸۰. This is just one example of exegesis of the - ۱ Qur`an according to one's own personal opinion and the book of Tafsir of Ibne 'Arabi, just as his work Fususul Hikm is full of such examples of Tafsir of the Qur`an according to his own personal whims and opinions which is both – from the viewpoint .of the intellect and also the Islamic jurisprudence – not permissible

.the Qur`an which a person wishes to express

Part ۱۱: Awareness of the Philosophical and Scientific Theories

Having an awareness of the philosophical and scientific theories is a valuable source for the mind which would permit the intellect to expand and would lead to valuable interpretations of the Qur`an. By this we mean that although one must keep away from any form of explanation of the Qur`an according to one's own personal opinion and must not seek to interpret the Qur`an in order to justify and validate one's .preconceived beliefs and thoughts

However, at the same time, possessing an awareness of the thoughts and theories of the great philosophers of Islam in regards to monotheism (Tawhid), the characteristics and actions of Allah (awj) and other issues in relation to the beginning of creation and resurrection, in addition to having knowledge and understanding of the physical properties and makeup of the world and of mankind, will all lead one to having a better insight. In the end, this awareness and knowledge would actually .allow a person to gain more benefit from the Qur`an

Today, humanity has made great progress in attaining knowledge of the Earth, universe, and animal kingdom. Humankind has arrived at new horizons of understanding in regards to the sciences of psychology and sociology. Although it is correct to assert that not all of the knowledge that has been gained up until today is completely correct, however having a better understanding of the scientific breakthroughs and discoveries can lead a person's philosophical and scientific .awareness to become stronger

This acts as a source of blossoming of the mind of the commentator of the Qur`an, and grants him a special ability through which he would be able to make use of the .Qur`an in the most complete way

.We narrate the following example in this regard to better understand this point

The six verses mentioned in the beginning of Suratul Hadid (٥٧) are the most clear proofs and words which we have in our possession to better understand this point. In this example of ours, we shall refer to and quote only two verses along with their :translation

هُوَ الْأَوَّلُ وَالآخِـرُ وَالظَّاهِرُ وَالْبَاطِـنُ وَهُـوَ بِكُلِّ شَـــيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ هُوَ الَّذِى خَلَقَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالأَرْضَ فِى سِتَّهِ أَيَّامٍ ثُمَّ اسْـتَوَى عَلى الْعَرْشِ يَعْلَمُ مَـا يَلِجُ فِى الأَـرْضِ وَمَـا يَخْرُجُ مِنْهَا وَمَا يَنْزِلُ مِنَ السَّمَآءِ وَمَا يَعْرُجُ فِـيهَا وَهُوَ مَعَكُمْ أَيْنَ مَا كُنْـتُمْ وَاللّٰهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيرٌ

He is the First and the Last and the Apparent and the Hidden and He has knowledge“ of all things. He it is Who created the Heavens and the Earth in six days; then settled on the Throne. He knows that which goes deep down into the Earth and that which comes forth out of it, and that which comes down from the sky and that which goes up (into it, and He is with you wherever you are. And Allah sees what you do.”(١

The philosophical and theological points mentioned in these two verses of the Qur`an (and indeed in the other four verses which follow) are so

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Suratul Hadid (٥٧), Verses ٣ ۴ -١

great that Imam ’Ali b. Husayn as-Sajjad (‘a) has stated the following in regards to :these verses

نُزِلَتْ لِلْمُتَعَمِّقِينَ فِى آخِرِ الزَّمَانِ.

These verses and indeed this chapter of the Qur`an) were revealed for those)“ people who would come at the end of time who would go forth in deep thinking and ”.pondering

There is not a single person who could objectively state that with mere knowledge of the Arabic language, he would be able to elucidate upon these verses of the Qur`an. When we (for example) go forth to translate these verses into Farsi, we would still remain in a state of ambiguity and uncertainty in regards to the actual purport of .these verses

However, the knowledge which we have gained through what the researchers of Islam have stated in regards to the encompassing nature of an entity and the science of the beginning of creation, act as a tool which permits the blossoming of the mind, which in turn leads us to having a better understanding of the substance of these .verses of the Qur`an

Is it possible for a person who has never studied anything and never seen a teacher :to reach to the depths of the sentence which reads

وَهُوَ مَعَكُمْ أَیْـنَمَا کُنْـتُمْ

”.And He is with you wherever you may be“

Can anyone who does not possess deeply grounded knowledge in the teachings of :the Divine understand the reality of the part of the verse that reads

هُوَ الأَوَّلُ وَالآخِرُ وَالظَّاهِرُ وَالبَاطِـنُ

He (Allah) is the First and the Last, the Apparent and the“

”...Hidden

We must repeat this point that: Our purpose in stating this issue is not that we go forth and interpret the Qur`an through the use of Greek or Islamic philosophy or through employing the new sciences and that we compare the Qur`an with these fallible theories. If this was the case, then surely this would be nothing other than commentary of the Qur`an through our own opinion which is, as we know and as was previously mentioned, prohibited both through employing the logical understanding !and the Islamic legislations

Rather, our aim here is that this form of awareness and knowledge (of other sciences and theories) would actually give our intellect the power and strength to better understand the verses of the Qur`an with a much more careful precision and in which we would be in a better position to appreciate the aims and goals intended by this .Heavenly Book

Today, the discussions of the psychologists and sociologists in regards to mankind and the studies of the scholars of the natural sciences in regards to the Earth and Universe have opened up new horizons in understanding the Qur`an and have given .people in this day and age, the power to look at the Qur`an in a new light

At this point, the greatness contained in the words of the eighth Imam, ’Ali b. Musa al-Rida (‘a) are made manifest. Once, a person asked the Imam (‘a) the following :question

مَا بَالُ الْقُرَآنِ لاَ يَزْدَادُ عِنْدَ النَّشْرِ وَالدَّرْسِ إِلاَّ غَضَاضَةً؟

Why does the publication and study“

p: ۵۲

"?of the Qur'an, increase its freshness and newness

:The Imam ('a) replied

لأَنَّ اللَّهَ تَبَارَکَ وَ تَعَالَـی لَمْ یَجْعَلْهُ لِزَمَانٍ دُوْنَ زَمَانٍ، وَ لاَ لِنَاسٍ دُوْنَ نَاسٍ، فَهُوَ فِی کُلِّ زَمَانٍ جَدِیدٌ، وَ عِنْدَ کُلِّ قَوْمٍ غَضٌّ إِلَـی یَوْمِ الْقِیَامَهِ.

This is because Allah, the Blessed and the High, did not make it (the Qur`an) for a" particular time period nor for a specific group of people. Therefore it is new for every (time and fresh for every nation until the Day of Resurrection."(1

:Perhaps it is due to this very reason that Ibne Abbas has said

أَلْقُرْآنُ یُفَسِّرُهُ الزَّمَانَ.

".Time interprets the Qur'an"

The meaning of time is the different thoughts and sciences that appear in the human society, which bestow a new vision to the exegete of the Qur'an, as a result of which he derives such information from the Qur'an that the minds of his predecessors never .contained

Part 12: Understanding of the Early History of Islam

The meaning of the 'early history of Islam' are those events which took place after the official appointment of the Prophet Muhammad ('s) – specifically that which occurred after the migration to Madinah as a [significant] portion of the verses of the Qur`an were revealed after this event. Thus, amongst all of these events, having knowledge of the history of the battles and expeditions which were carried out is very .effective in offering commentary on some of the verses of the Qur`an

There are numerous verses in regards to events such as the Battles of Badr, Uhud, Ahzab; the event of Bani Mustalaq; the peace treaty

Tafsirul Burhan, vol. ١, pg. ٢٨ -١

of Hudaybiyyah; the victory over the city of Makkah (Fathul Makkah), the tribe of Bani Nadhir and the Jewish nation. Thus, having a comprehensive knowledge of the history of these events which have been discussed in the Qur`an in their own particular way also acts as a clear source for understanding the verses of the Qur`an which are related to the battles, expeditions and other events and this issue is one of those .which is clear and understandable for all commentators of the Qur`an

In this regard, one must refer to the authentic and true historical accounts, which have been written by the impartial and nonaligned historians. Through employing a systematic and methodical process, the correct historical accounts must be separated .from the unauthentic reports

Of course, within the books of history and biography, there are unfounded reports and narrations which are not in line with our Islamic beliefs, nor are they congruent with the verses of the Qur`an. Thus for the researcher who possesses awareness of the principles of history, he would be able to differentiate between the truth and .(falsehood (in these historical reports

In this regard, we can recommend the following books: as-Sirah of Ibne Hisham, Murujul Dhahab of al-Masudi, Imtiaul Asma of al-Maqrizi and al-Kamil by Ibne Athir. However, it must be understood that we can not accept the entire content of these books. Rather as can be seen, some of them contain issues which have absolutely no foundation and go against both the intellect and the narrated

!proofs

For example: In al-Kamil by Ibne Athir, when he relates the incident of Zaid and his wife, Zainab, he mentions something which no one other than an open and aware enemy [of Islam and the Prophet (‘s)] would claim to have occurred.(١)

In addition, in regards to the attack of the army [from Yemen on the Kabah] and their destruction through the small birds which were sent to destroy them (by Allah (awj)), things are mentioned which go directly against the verses of the Qur`an!(٢)

The work, as-Sirah of Ibne Hisham, is the best book which has been written in regards to the life of the Noble Prophet of Islam (‘s). In actuality, this book is a summary of the work, as-Sirah of Ibne Ishaq, which is unfortunately no longer available. If however, the Muslim scholars are able to find a copy of this book in any of the libraries of the world and after making minor corrections and some additional research (on the sources referred to in the book) are then able to have this work printed, then it would not be inconceivable that this book would open up a new horizon on the life of the Prophet (‘s) for us which the Sirah of Ibne Hisham has not been able to accomplish! It should be kept in mind that Ibne Ishaq was a Shi’a, while the one who summarized his work, meaning Ibne Hisham, was a Sunni, and thus, in various issues, there was a difference of opinion between them.

١- al-Kamil by Ibne Athir, vol. ٢, pg. ١٢١

٢- Ibid., vol. ١, pg. ٢۶٣

Part ۱۳: Familiarity with the Stories and the History of the Lives of Previous Prophets

A great portion of the verses of the Qur`an are in relation to the history of the previous prophets and we are given a brief insight into the lives of some of these great men and the ways of their struggles with the oppressors and tyrants of their .time

Having knowledge of the history of the life of previous nations such as 'Ad and Thamud, or having knowledge of the satanic powers of the oppressors such as those in Babil [present day Iraq] and the Pharaohs of Egypt, make the verses which speak of the struggles of the various prophets such as Hud ('a), Salih ('a), Ibrahim ('a) and Musa .('a) clear to us

Information on the lives of the prophets of the Children of Israel (Bani Isra'il), especially of prophets Dawud ('a) and Sulayman ('a) help us understand many of the verses of the Qur`an. In referring to the verses of the Qur`an in regards to these two individuals, the truthfulness in our words (in regards to these two prophets) would be .made clear to everyone

Of course in this section, we must not give up our prudence and caution (in conducting research) and must recognize the correct and authentic reports from the incorrect and unauthentic ones, especially when it comes to the prophets sent to the Children of Israel and the forged traditions known as "Isra'ili" narrations, which are large in .number and can never be relied upon

Part ۱۴: Knowledge of the Historical Environment in which the Qur`an was Revealed

The Qur`an was revealed in an environment in which the

people were accustomed to a particular style of life and thus, the verses of the Qur`an which were sent down were suitable to and alluded to the lifestyle, traditions and customs of those people. In addition, the verses also went forth to comment on !these people and their (negative) characteristics

Thus, it is necessary for the commentator of the Qur`an to be aware of the lifestyle of the 'Arabs before Islam and even those contemporary to the revelation of the Qur`an so that they are able to clearly understand the verses of the Qur`an in relation to a .particular theme

For example, the Qur`an speaks about various issues and topics such as Azlam(۱) (animals which have been slaughtered as a sacrifice to the various false gods and idols), and the various idols such as Wadda, Suwaf, Yaghuth, Yafuqa and Nasra (۲). In addition, the Qur`an also speaks about issues such as the morals and ethical traits of the 'Arabs and their repulsive acts such as the killing of their female infants(۳). The verses of the Qur`an also speak about the relationship which the Arabs had with the orphans of the society and tens of other topics in relation to the life of the Arabs before Islam and during the time of the Prophet ('s). Thus, the ability to completely review and explain the verses of the Qur`an in regards to these issues can only be performed by the person who has a full understanding of the complete way of life of this group

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۱- Suratul Maidah (۵), Verses ۳ and ۹۰

۲- Surat Nuh (۷۱), Verse ۲۳

۳- Suratul Takwir (۸۱), Verse ۸

of people since the Qur`an was revealed in the environment and surroundings of .these people

Sometimes, the Qur`an presents the truths to us in the form of a parable [such as the parable of the falsehood being equated with seeing a mirage in the desert]. However the only person who is able to understand the reality of the parable (of a mirage) is one who has an understanding of life in the desert or lives in a dry and arid land with .little to no agriculture

For example, when Allah (awj) mentions the parable of the truth and falsehood as :being like a mirage, which one sees and He (awj) says

وَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا أَعْمَالُهُمْ كَسَرَابٍ بِقِيعَةٍ يَحْسَبُهُ الظَّمْآنُ مَـــــاءً

And (as for) those who disbelieve, their deeds are like a mirage in the desert, which" (the thirsty man deems to be water."(١

The person who lives in the desert or who has knowledge of the life of such people would be able to better understand the actuality of this parable whereas the person who lives near the banks of a river or in a very grassy, lush area would not, in the .beginning stages, be able to fully understand the actuality of this similitude

"Part ١۵: Knowing the Verses of the Qur`an which are "Makki" and "Madani

In regards to the time of their revelation, the verses of the Qur`an are divided into two categories – they are either verses which were revealed before the migration (to Madinah), or those which were revealed after the migration (to Madinah). The first group of verses are known as

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Suratul Nur (٢۴), Verse ٣٩ -١

‘Makki’ while the second group are referred to as ‘Madani.’(۱)

The Makki verses have their own particular style to them and the Madani verses also have their own style.

The verses which are referred to as ‘Makki’ were revealed at a time in which the Muslims lived the life of a small “unknown” group who did not have the power to stand up and struggle against those who opposed them. The condition of their lives did not permit them to go forth to elucidate upon the practical laws of Islam such as Salat, Sawm, Zakat, Khums and Jihad. Therefore, a majority of the verses of the Makki period were in regards to the polytheists and a majority of these verses of the Qur`an were in regards to elucidating on the beliefs and lofty theological issues of the faith of Islam.

However, the conditions which existed in Madinah were of another form and after seeing that the environment was friendly to them, the Muslims emerged as a powerful force. Consequently, the explanation of the practical laws of Islam was entirely possible. It is for this reason that the verses in relation to the practical laws of Islam such as those of Salat, Sawm, Zakat, Khums and Jihad were revealed in the city of Madinah.

Being aware of these two types of verses will definitely help a person reach the goal of the verses of the Qur`an.

The scholar who is not able to correctly differentiate which verse is Makki and which is Madani, may say,

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۱- The common and well-known terminologies which are used in the commentary of the verses of the Qur`an are ‘Makki’ and ‘Madani’, just as has been stated. However, these verses are known with other words and terminologies which those who are specialists in the field of Tafsir are well acquainted with.

:in regards to the verse which reads

قُلْ لَّا أَسْئَلُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ أَجْراً إِلَّا الْمَوَدَّةَ فِى الْقُرْبَـــى

Say (O' Muhammad): I ask you (Muslims) no reward for my work except love for my..."
(close family members."(۱)

that it was not revealed in regards to the family of the Prophet ('s) since the Surah which this verse comes from is a Makki chapter and was revealed in the city of Makkah. Thus, for the Prophet ('s) to ask for such a thing (love for his close family members) at that time period (when he had no family members) is nothing but him merely expressing an eloquent statement full of pleasantries (with no way to actually .(implement it

However, if we look at the books written in regards to the recognition of the Makki verses from the Madani verses, it would be clear to such a commentator that simply because a chapter of the Qur`an is known to be a Makki chapter does not mean that all of the verses of that Surah were revealed in Makkah! It is possible that Makki verses may be found in chapters of the Qur`an which are known as Madani and vice .versa

More than this, the commentators of the Qur`an who have considered Suratul Shura (which is where the verse quoted above has been taken from) to be revealed in Makkah have mentioned that specifically this verse (under discussion) and a few (other verses of this Surah are Madani.(۲

What has been mentioned up until this point are fourteen fundamental pillars

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۱- Suratul Shura` (۴۲), Verse ۲۳

۲- We are able to discern which surahs were revealed in Makkah and which were revealed in Madinah by keeping the following two points in mind: ۱. The traditions (ahadith) which mention to us the place of revelation of a specific surah. ۲. Pondering

over the contents of the verses of the surah as this action usually acts as a chain of events and tells us if the surah was revealed in Makkah or Madinah. Seeing as how the cities of Makkah and Madinah were two completely different environments, we understand that each was governed by its own ways of thought, and thus the religion of Islam was put face to face with issues and difficulties which were specific to that particular area. Thus, after we are acquainted with the way of thinking and the particular issues of an area (Makkah or Madinah), and have studied the contents of a surah, we are then able to understand where the surah or the verses of the surah were revealed. For instance, the environment of Makkah was polluted with polytheism and idol worship. The Jews and Christians had not permeated into this city and thus, those who had true faith (iman) were very small in number. The issue of jihad was not brought up in this environment and in during this time, the Prophet (‘s) had frequent dealings and relations with the idol worshippers. The point of difference of the Prophet (‘s) with the polytheists (of Makkah) was concerning tawhid (the Oneness of Allah (awj)) and the concept of being brought back to life on the Day of Judgment after the physical death in this world. It is for this reason that the verses whose axis rotates around the discussion of issues such as the origin (of life), Resurrection Day, reproaching polytheism and speaking about the outcome of the previous generations which were inflicted with the anger and punishment of Allah (awj) due to not following His commandments and their appointed Messengers were most often revealed in Makkah. However the environment in Madinah was an atmosphere of faith, virtue and piety. It was a center where the Ahlul Kitab – especially the Jews – had influenced and permeated into. It was an atmosphere of young men, heroes, champions and brave individuals who readily accepted the teachings of Islam. In addition, it was also an environment where the Muslims had little need to discuss the foundational beliefs (Usul ad-Din) of the religion, and thus it was time for them to become acquainted with a series of other issues including their practical responsibilities, ethical and societal guidelines and the performance of devotional acts such as salat, sawm (fasting), zakat and other issues. It is because of this fact that the verses in relation to the Tawrat and Injil and the beliefs of the Ahlul Kitab (Jews and Christians) and the explanation of the altercations, battles and wars of the Muslims with the Ahlul Kitab and the polytheists were revealed in Madinah. Also,

the verses which speak of the principles of etiquette and the commandments of the religion including the obligatory (wajib) and recommended (mustahab) acts were all revealed in Madinah – meaning after the migration (hijrah) of the Prophet ('s) from Makkah to Madinah. Given that the mood in Madinah was one of interaction between the Prophet ('s) and the Ansar (the local people of Madinah who welcomed the Prophet ('s) and his followers to their city) and other groups that slowly accepted the teachings of Islam, this limited time frame did not permit the Prophet ('s) to discuss issues such as condemning the idols and idol worshippers (while in Madinah – as they had already been covered while in Makkah). Conversely, the atmosphere in Makkah was not conducive to discussing ethical issues, since the people of Makkah still held doubts concerning the principles of Islam (origin of life and Day of Resurrection), did not attest to the prophetic mission of the Prophet of Islam ('s) and had not yet developed faith in his universal message. [Taken from, The Islamic Moral System: A Commentary of Surat al-Hujurat by Ayatullah Ja'far Suhani translated by Saleem Bhimji]

of a correct method of commentary of the Qur`an, some of which have a particular priority associated with them. Even though we are able to group some of them with others in the discussion, such as the eleventh and twelfth points which were ‘knowledge of the history of Islam’ and ‘knowledge of the previous prophets sent and their stories’, which could technically be covered under the heading of ‘knowledge of the history of revelation of the verses of the Qur`an’, however in order to make this .discussion clear and unambiguous, we decided to review each of these separately

"Part ۱۶: Question On the Phrase "Clear Arabic

point

Up until this point, the conditions and fundamental pillars upon which a correct commentary of the Qur`an lie upon have been made clear. However in relation to this, a question is raised which we must answer: What is the meaning of the phrase "عَرَبِيٌ مُبِينٌ" mentioned in the Qur`an of or that the Qur`an has been presented in "Clear ?"Arabic

If the commentary of the Qur`an requires such a series of preparatory steps as have been mentioned, then why has the Qur`an referred to itself with the following :description

وَ هٰذَا لِسَانٌ عَرَبِيٌّ مُّبِينٌ

"And this (the Qur`an) is in a clear, understandable, Arabic."(۱)

:In another instance, we read

نَــزَلَ بِهِ الرُّوحُ الأَمِينُ عَلَى قَلْبِكَ لِتَكُونَ مِـــنَ الْمُنْذِرِينَ بِلِسَانٍ عَرَبِيٍّ مُّبِينٍ

"The Trustworthy Spirit (Jibra`il) has brought this (the Qur`an) to your (Muhammad) heart so that you may be amongst the warners, in a clear, understandable, Arabic."(۲)

Is the meaning of these two verses

١- Suratul Nahl (١٦), Verse ١٠٣

٢- Suratul Shu’ara (٢٦), Verse ١٩٣ to ١٩٥

and many other similar verses anything other than the fact that the only thing needed ?to explain the Qur`an is an awareness of the Arabic language and nothing else

Answer

Seeing as how the polytheistic Arabs felt powerless in regards to the challenges being offered in the Qur`an, they were incessantly plunged into deep thought about the origin of this Book. Thus in the end they had to state that, "Muhammad learned the Qur`an from two Roman slaves named Jabr and Yasar and others like them" (۱), and :this is what has been alluded to in a verse of the Qur`an where it states

وَلَقَدْ نَعْلَمُ أَنَّهُمْ يَقُولُونَ إِنَّمَا يُعَلِّمُهُ بَشَـرٌ لِسَانُ الَّذِى يُلْحِدُونَ إِلَـيْهِ أَعْجَمِيٌّ وَّهٰذَا لِـــسَانٌ عَرَبِيٌّ مُّبِينٌ

And certainly We indeed know that they say, "It is a mortal human being who teaches" him (Muhammad)." The tongue (language) of him, they wickedly point to, is notably (foreign, while this is Arabic, pure and clear."(۲

is something that is vague or ambiguous and "عجم" The original meaning of the word one who is a non-Arab) whose mode of) "أعجمى" thus a person would be called an expression was defective – whether he was an Arab or a non-Arab. Seeing as how the Arab did not have an awareness of other than his own language, the non-Arab referred to others as Ajam as well since they did not properly understand Arabic or .were not able to speak the Arabic language in a correct manner

Keeping in mind the history of revelation of this verse of

Tafsir al-Kashaf, vol. ۲, pg. ۳۱۸ -۱

Suratul Nahl (۱۶), Verse ۱۰۳ -۲

the Qur`an which some commentators have mentioned, the purpose of this verse is to ask the question that: Is it logical to bring up a point of contention that, “Is it right to claim that the Prophet (‘s) had learnt the Qur`an from such individuals (non-Arabs or those who were not eloquent in the Arabic language), where as we see that the Qur`an is replete with eloquence, expressiveness, allure and attraction and has a ?!certain sweetness and harmony to it

When we look at the speech of these two individuals (the two Romans mentioned above), we see that they definitely lacked these qualities since they were Romans and were individuals who had no awareness of the Arabic language. Even if we assume that they knew the general workings of the Arabic language, however still, we know that they could not speak the language well and their words and thoughts were not ”.free from errors and distortion

Therefore, the true meaning of the verse under review is that the Qur`an is an accurate speech, an eloquent communication and is free from all forms of error and distortion (in the language used). Due to this, we are not able to accept the influence .of these two individuals or others such as them

However it must be noted that by the Qur`an being an eloquent and expressive work, or a writing which is free from errors and distortions does not mean that the .prerequisites which have been explained in this book are not needed

p: ۶۳

Thus, there is no incongruity between requiring such prerequisites as mentioned in this work and the Qur`an being a work of “plain and clear Arabic.”

Today in all countries of the world, we see various technical books on the mode of teaching or books of higher learning which have been written in very smooth and fluid style which are far removed from any sort of complexity. Unfortunately though, all of these books, or at least a good majority of them, are still in need of a teacher or instructor (in order to understand them).

In clearer terms we can state that: If the Qur`an is written in a clear Arabic prose, then the meaning of this is that the way that the Qur`an speaks is not the way that those who do not know Arabic would speak – meaning that they would gather a few words, mix them together erroneously and inaccurately and then think that they are speaking Arabic. Rather, it is a Book which is completely in line with the rules of the Arabic language and is far from all forms of distortion and error in its language and complication of speaking.

This reality is made clearer when we see that throughout the Arabian Peninsula during the era when the Qur`an was being revealed, there were priests who considered themselves as interpreters of the words of the Jinn and Spirits. In their own beliefs and statements, they used to say: “Where as the words of these creatures (the Jinn and Spirits)

were in Arabic, it was such an inarticulate and confused speech that with the exception of a limited group of people, no one else could understand what they were saying. In their speaking, more often than not, they would make use of unfamiliar and ".foreign words

At this point, we bring forth an example from the words of one of these priests, named Sutih, who claimed to be an interpreter of the words of the Jinn and who lived during the time of the Prophet of Islam ('s). From this narration, it is clear how and why the Qur`an is known as a Book which has been written in "clear and manifest ."Arabic

What we quote below is just one line from one of these priests who offered a reply to an ambassador who had travelled from Iran, looking for answers in regards to various inexplicable signs which were seen on the night of the birth of the Messenger :(of Allah, Muhammad ('s)(۱

عَبْدُ الْمَسِيحِ عَلـى جَمَلٍ مَشِيحٍ، أَقْبَلَ إِلـى سَطِيحٍ، وَقَدْ أَوْفـى إِلـى الضَّرِيحِ بَعَثَكَ مَلِكُ سَاسَانِ، لارْتِجَاسِ الإِيوَانِ، وَرُؤْيَا الْمُؤَبِّذَانِ، رَأَى إِبِلاً صِعَاباً، تَقُودُ خَيْلاً عِرَاباً.

Abd al-Masih(۲), mounted on a serious and swift camel(۳), has come to Satih(۴), who" has already approached his death(۵); The Sassanian king sent you due to the tremor of the chamber and the dream of the ruler of magians, who saw [in his dream] an "...obstinate camel leading an Arab(۶) horse

Just as can be seen in this sentence, expressing himself in the form of rhyme, through

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۱- Farid Wajid Encyclopedia under the world كهنن

۲- 'Abd al-Masih is the name of the ambassador who traveled from Iran. (Ed.)

۳ - The adjective mashih denotes both seriousness and swiftness. It sometimes means "cautious". (Ed.)

۴ - Here Satih is the name of the addressee of 'Abd al-Masih. The context of the speech indicates that he was very ill. The word satih literally signifies "spread out";

(.and is also used to denote a water vessel. (Ed

Note that the word ¤arih does not mean “death” but rather a tomb, shrine, trench -۵ or an oblong excavation in the middle of a grave. However, the context of the (.expression implies death. (Ed

.(See Lisan al-’Arab under the root word (‘a-r-b -۶

employing short sentences and making use of unintelligent words, his thoughts are actually the basis for confusion and bewilderment!

However we see that the style of the Qur`an is a completely different form, and its style of poetry is a clear and expressive mode. In addition, the Arabic used in the Qur`an is eloquent and articulate. As well, possessing such a form of perfection (in its language and mode of expression as is the case of the Qur`an) does not prevent us from accepting the fact that from the point of view of its contents, it is such a fathomless ocean of knowledge that it is not possible to dive into the depths of understanding it without a teacher. The conditions (which were previously mentioned) that rule over the exegesis of the Qur`an must be in place and observed in order to correctly benefit from the contents of this Divine work.

Today, all of the books written in relation to physics, chemistry or even mathematics are, from the point of view of their language, written correctly and with great eloquence and even have pictures and diagrams in them, however in order to understand and make use of these books, one is in need of a teacher!

The rules related to the court system have been penned in the most eloquent of styles, are far removed from any sort of errors and distortions in their language, contain no obscurity whatsoever and have been written without any sort of complications. However still, not a

single person would permit himself to, without possessing the specific qualifications !(to understand such works), make use of these works

The Qur`an tells us: I speak with complete clarity – I do not speak like those who have no knowledge of the rules of the Arabic language whose words are full of errors and distortions (in language), nor do I speak like those priests who converse with the Jinns and Spirits (who too do not possess a correct understanding of the rules of Arabic) ...and who make use of unintelligible sentences and words

:Thus in summary: Verses such as the one below and others which state

وَلَقَدْ يَسَّرْنَا الْقُرآنَ لِلذِّكْرِ فَهَلْ مِنْ مُّدَّكِرٍ

And We have indeed made the Qur`an easy to understand for remembrance, then is" (there any that will receive admonition?"(١)

:are in the Qur`an as a response to two groups of people

١. The first group are those people who, due to the fact they are not fluent in Arabic, ;would themselves speak Arabic in an incorrect manner and full of errors

٢. The second group is those people who have a habit of speaking in inexpressive and contorted ways and have bound themselves to speaking in prose and short sentences. In place of paying attention to the meaning of what they want to say, they .(instead place the emphasis on the words they use (and the method of speaking

However the method of the Qur`an is something other than is seen in these two forms of speech. Nonetheless, this sophistication in speech

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١- Suratul Qamar (۵۴), Verse ١٧

does not mean that a person can ignore the need to pay careful attention to the depth of the words being spoken, referring to other verses of the Qur`an, referring to the history of revelation of the verse and the reliable ahadith and other issues in .understanding the message of the Qur`an

Principally, the person who reaches at a conclusion from the verse quoted above and other such verses that a commentator of the Qur`an is not in need of referring to anything else (other than the Qur`an), has not followed the third and sixth conditions from the fourteen conditions which we have discussed in detail nor has he paid any attention to them. Through drawing a conclusion from the verse quoted above, they have neglected another verse which presents Allah (awj) and the Prophet ('s) as the commentators and elucidators of the Qur`an(۱) and others which clearly state that the task of commenting on and explaining the Qur`an is the sole responsibility of Allah ((awj).(۲)

Closure

At this point, we bring our discussion to a close and end our discourse by quoting the words of the Commander of the Faithful, Ali b. Abi Talib ('a). In one particular event, the Commander of the Faithful Ali b. Abi Talib ('a) sent Ibne Abbas towards the Khawarij (a group of individuals who had in fact, left the faith of Islam due to their :deviant beliefs) to debate with them, however offered him the following advice

لاَ تُخَاصِمْهُمْ بِالْقُرْآنِ فَإِنَّ الْقُرْآنَ حَمَّالٌ ذُو وُجُوهٍ

Suratul Nahl (۱۶), Verse ۷۸ -۱

Suratul Qiyamat (۷۵), Verse ۱۹ -۲

تَقُولُ وَ يَقُولُونَ... وَ لٰكِنْ حَاجِجْهُمْ بِالسُّـنَّهِ فَإِنَّهُمْ لَنْ يَجِدُوا عَنْهَا مَحِيصاً.

O' Ibne Abbas!) In your debates and discussions with them (the Khawarij), never)" resort to replying to them with the Qur`an, since surely the Qur`an contains verses which have various probabilities and possibilities to them (in their meaning and understanding). You shall speak to them (with the Qur`an), and they shall reply to you (with the Qur`an) and thus, your discussion with them will be prolonged. Rather, debate them using the sunnah since surely in that there is the straightforward and (unequivocal reply and they will find no way to misrepresent the truth."(١)

This very valuable sentence clearly tells us that there are some verses of the Qur`an which have various possibilities in their meaning and it is not possible to specify one meaning to a verse without first going through the introductory steps (of understanding the verse). By merely possessing knowledge of the rules of the Arabic language, the section of ambiguities will never be removed. Thus, the only way the .ambiguities are removed is through the fourteen ways mentioned in this work

This hadith also relates to us the fact that all of the verses of the Qur`an are not straightforward proofs (which can be picked up and used without discretion) and thus in determining the true meaning where there is multiple possibilities of a particular .verse, we must refer to other ways and means

Ja'far Subhani

Writing completed on the

٢٧th of Muharram al-Haram, ١۴٠۴ ah

٢nd November, ١٩٨٣ ce]

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هَلْيَسْتَوِيالَّذِينَيَعْلَمُونَوَالَّذِينَلَايَعْلَمُونَ

?Are those who know equal to those who do not know

al-Zumar: ۹

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Ghaemiyeh Computer Research Institute of Isfahan, from ۲۰۰۷, under the authority of Ayatollah Haj SayyedHasanFaqihImami (God blesses his soul), by sincere and daily efforts of university and seminary elites and sophisticated groups began its activities .in religious, cultural and scientific fields

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